

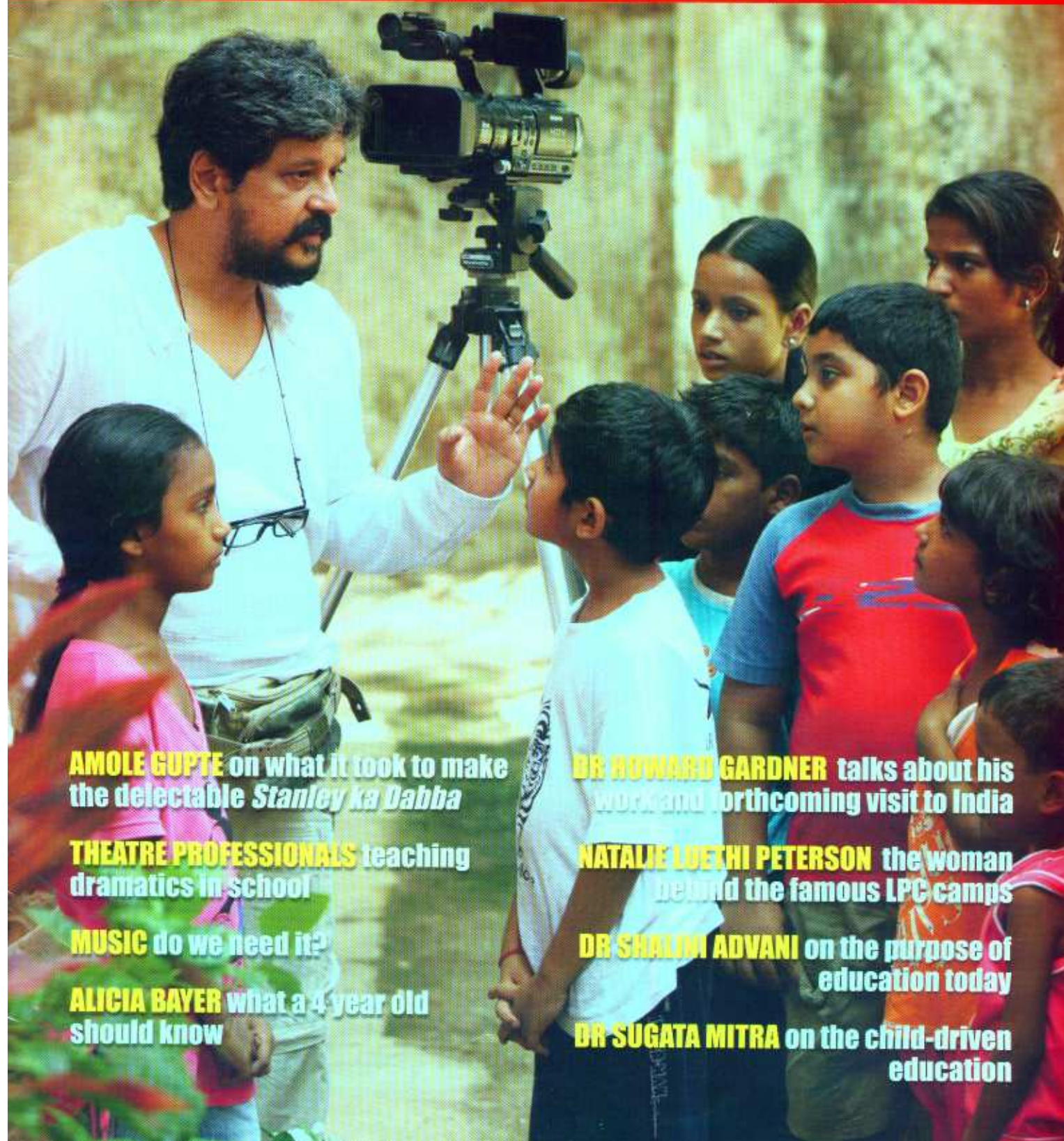
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EDUCATION FOR THE FUTURE

On the eve of his visit to India in early 2012, Dr Howard Gardner, selected by *Foreign Policy* and *Prospect* magazines as one of the top 100 most influential public intellectuals in the world, lays out his life work, what he plans to share during the tour and why he is a great admirer of Mahatma Gandhi.

I think that the ideas that Gandhi developed about how human beings relate to one another, what people do when they do not agree about things, about the kind of stance that you have to be prepared to take in terms of your value system – incredibly important but it will probably take a long period of time to see whether or not the Gandhian ideas take hold both in Asia and in the rest of the World.

Greetings I'm Howard Gardner and I am speaking to you from Cambridge, Massachusetts, in the United States. Because I'm about to make a trip to India I'd like to tell you a little bit about who I am and about my background, some of the reasons why I am looking forward to my trip, talk about some of the work that I've done in the past and then finally the issues that I've been thinking about at present and going forward.

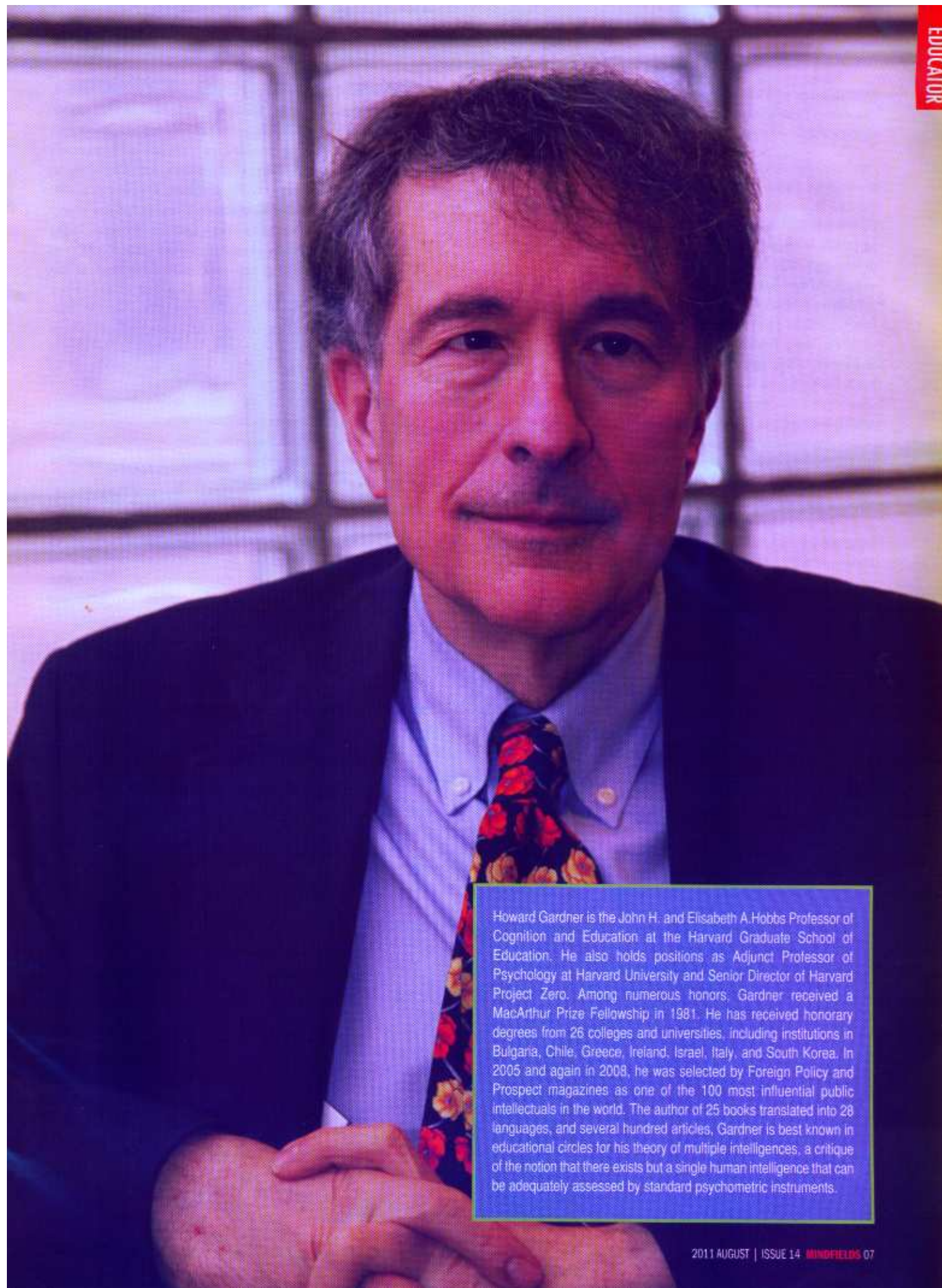
I am American born from parents who came from Europe, from Germany and I lived in Pennsylvania in the North East of the United States until I became a student in Harvard College many years ago, in fact this is my 50th year being in Harvard – first as a student, then as a researcher and most recently as a professor.

I began with an interest in psychology and social science and began as a researcher but then moved a lot into the area of education. A lot of my work in the last few decades has been educational practice and policy and my primary affiliation is with the school of education and then more recently I've been looking at broader questions of the kind of society we have and the kind of society I think we ought to have – so I've been moving, we might say, into the area of vision and trying to envision the world different from the way that it is.

Even as young person I was always interested in India. India going back for a millennia has been the seat of great civilizations, important ideas, important practices, great art and it also happens to be the country in which the

person lived who I think happens to be the most important human being for the last thousand years and that's the mahatma, Mahatma Gandhi. Now you may think that it is odd that an American saying the praises of Gandhi particularly because at present it is not easy to see his influence in contemporary India but when I say a thousand years, I'm keeping a very broad prospect. I think that the ideas that Gandhi developed about how human beings relate to one another, what people do when they do not agree about things, about the kind of stance that you have to be prepared to take in terms of your value system – incredibly important but it will probably take a long period of time to see whether or not the Gandhian ideas take hold both in Asia and in the rest of the World.

Even though I've had an interest of many decades in India, in fact I've written about Gandhi in three of the books I've written, I've never made a trip to India and so when I began to speak to Ashish Rajpal, who was a student of mine in Harvard and then to his colleague Anustup Nayak, who also was a Harvard student and we talked about the possibility of making a trip to India early in 2012. I became very excited about the idea – like many people I'm interested in traveling to new places, meeting new people, having a chance to exchange ideas with people in education, with policy makers, with thought leaders, people who can write about ideas that are in the air, people from different sectors of the society – from art, from universities, from business, from the non-profit sector and even though I would be giving talks in several cities during the period of my visit, I'd expect to



Howard Gardner is the John H. and Elisabeth A. Hobbs Professor of Cognition and Education at the Harvard Graduate School of Education. He also holds positions as Adjunct Professor of Psychology at Harvard University and Senior Director of Harvard Project Zero. Among numerous honors, Gardner received a MacArthur Prize Fellowship in 1981. He has received honorary degrees from 26 colleges and universities, including institutions in Bulgaria, Chile, Greece, Ireland, Israel, Italy, and South Korea. In 2005 and again in 2008, he was selected by *Foreign Policy* and *Prospect* magazines as one of the 100 most influential public intellectuals in the world. The author of 25 books translated into 28 languages, and several hundred articles, Gardner is best known in educational circles for his theory of multiple intelligences, a critique of the notion that there exists but a single human intelligence that can be adequately assessed by standard psychometric instruments.

gain to learn at least as much, probably more than I can give to the audiences and to the people with whom I meet.

So that's a bit about my identity and my motivation about making a trip to India. Let me be a bit more specific about my own work. As I mentioned, I was trained in psychology in particular in cognitive psychology—how human beings think about things and in developmental psychology—how our thoughts develop from childhood to latent life and as part of that empirical work with young people and with other populations including brain damaged adults, I developed, thirty years ago, a theory called the Theory of Multiple Intelligences. And that theory posits that instead of there being a single general intelligence which people have in varying degrees. That instead, people have a lot of relatively independent faculties or abilities, which I call the Multiple Intelligences. And even though I saw this principally as a contribution to psychology, in fact, the area where it has really taken off is in the area of education and there are multiple intelligence schools, classrooms and even networks of schools in many societies including in India.

This interest in the part of educators led me think more about how I conceptualized education and for me the important goal of education is to help people use their minds better to think about what's true in the world and what's not true, what's beautiful and what may not so qualify, what's ethical and what's not. And I see school is the place where once we become literate we acquire the various tools that people have developed over the years, the various academic disciplines, history, science, mathematics, the arts and the various professions—journalism, engineering, architecture that people developed to figure out how to understand the world and how to get things done. As part of the theory of multiple intelligences I've thought a lot about individuation, how do we teach each human being so that he or she can learn the best and how do we assess each person so he or she can show what they have understood and what they haven't understood about truth, beauty, goodness and the like.

Also as part of my work in education I have thought a lot about pluralisation and that means presenting important ideas in many many different ways. When there is an important idea whether it comes out of history or mathematics or the arts or politics, we can't just present it once, we have to present it in many ways and many times. And the more different ways in which we present ideas, the more intelligences that we can activate, the more likely there is that the person will really understand the idea, the topic, the theory that we are talking about.

And when I come to India, I will speak a lot about developing minds, about education for understanding, about how to individuate and how to pluralise the things that we think are important.

The goal of education is to help people use their minds better to think about what's true in the world and what's not true, what's beautiful and what may not so qualify, what's ethical and what's not.

Also in the last few decades, I've thought a lot about excellence. What does it mean to be truly excellent in something. I've studied excellence in leadership—what it means to be an excellent leader, which includes management but goes beyond management because leadership involves presenting visions of how the world should be and how the world can be. I've thought and written a lot about creativity—what does it mean to be an excellent creator, to come up with new ideas to implement them and to convince other people of those ideas. And I've thought a lot about what it means to be an excellent worker, an excellent citizen. How we can be not just technically proficient but also engaged in what we do and how we can do it at a very high ethical and moral level.

And in my trip to India I will be talking about how we achieve excellence in leadership, in creativity in work, in citizenship, and perhaps as I mention these areas, you can see why I'm so interested in Gandhi. Because Gandhi was tremendously creative, he was a very effective leader, and he thought more than anybody else about what it meant to be a citizen, not just of his state or his nation or his religion but of the entire planet. In an era of globalization that ability to be non-parochial, to think broadly, to place one selves in the largest space, in the largest firmament is so crucial.

I want to talk now about things I've been thinking about recently building on my work in education, building on my work on excellence. One thing I've been thinking about is what kinds of minds do we need to have going forwards in the future and I've written a book called *Five Minds for the Future* in which I describe three cognitive areas and two human areas where I think we need to focus our education in the future.

The cognitive areas are the Disciplined Mind – what it means to become truly experts in an area, the Synthesizing Mind – how we put things together which are disparate, which don't necessarily immediately call themselves to be combined, but which needs to be integrated if we are to understand them and if we are to communicate to other people and when we live at a time when we are deluged with information of all sorts much of which is of quite poor quality, the capacity to synthesize is tremendously important.

The third kind of cognitive mind is the Creative Mind, the mind that thinks outside the box, that come up with new ideas, with new practices. It's great to think outside the box but you can't think outside the box unless you have a box. And the box is the discipline and the synthesizing you have done before you can be generally creative.

The last two kinds of minds have to do with the human sphere. I call them the Respectful Mind and the Ethical Mind. The Respectful Mind recognizes that we

have tremendous diversity in the world, indeed tremendous diversity in any community of any size. And when people look and behave differently from us we can try to kill them, we can ignore them, we can tolerate them or we can try to work with them and clearly it is best for the world if we respect one another despite these differences maybe even because of these differences.

The Ethical Mind is the mind, which asks not just what rights do I have, human beings are very good nowadays at stating their rights but also what are our responsibilities, what are our duties and I am particularly interested in our responsibilities as workers if you are a professional of some sort—educator, doctor, engineer, architect, lawyer—what are your responsibilities, and if you are a citizen of a community or a state, a nation, a region, the entire world what are your responsibilities. And the Ethical Mind doesn't always get it right but it thinks a great deal about what it means to be a responsible worker and responsible citizen.

As an educator I am also very concerned about curriculum. What is it that we teach and how do we teach. And as I mentioned before I believe in school, once we have become literate it's our task to learn about what is true and what's not true, what is beautiful and cherished and what is not good. These issues have become more complex in recent years.

On the one hand we have what we call the postmodern or relativistic critique, which says who am I or who are you to say what is good and beautiful and true—that is just a matter of taste—every country, every state, every group have its own definition of truth, beauty and goodness. And because the technological world that we live in, the digital world, where anything that is posted can be changed, morphed, transformed, forgotten, combined, deleted, posted and so on, and it is very hard to think about truth, beauty and goodness when we have such a fast changing, facile, flexible world. So in a book that I recently published called *Truth, Beauty and Goodness Reframed*, I've tried to think through the traditional curricular goals in

the traditional subjects in light of the post-modern critique on the one hand and the very fast changing, flexible digital world on the other—and I expect to be talking about that on my trip to India.

Finally, I've studied intelligence for many years. I find it a very, very fascinating topic but I've become convinced in recent years that the kind of human beings we are and the kind of societies we live in is really much more important than whatever kind of intelligence we have. Because people can be very smart on any definition but if they don't use their abilities and their skills for the good, for trying to bring people together, for trying

As an educator I am also very concerned about curriculum. What is it that we teach and how do we teach. And as I mentioned before I believe in school, once we have become literate it's our task to learn about what is true and what's not true, what is beautiful and cherished and what is not good. These issues have become more complex in recent years.

to work toward peace, to trying to eradicate poverty and disease and hostility, then the use of all that intellect is really for naught.

And I worry about this in terms of the United States, India, China—countries, which have a tremendous focus nowadays on test scores in doing better in comparison but perhaps not enough focus on what's it all for, what kind of place we want to live in, what kind of people we want to be, what kind of a world do we want to live in. And here as in so many other spheres, Gandhi has something to teach us. I found a nice quotation from Gandhi with which I want to conclude. Gandhi said, "I'm an average man with less than average ability. I admit that I'm not sharp intellectually but I don't mind. There is a limit to the development of the intellect but none to that of the heart." Well I think in any definition Gandhi was pretty smart. He's probably putting himself down when he says he's not of average ability intellectually, but whether or not there is a limit to the development of the intellect, there certainly shouldn't be a limit to the development of the heart and coming to India next year I want to look as deeply and widely as possible with the kinds of things that you have cherished over the millennia and to figure out how all of us in the world can work together to have a world which we would be proud to live in with human beings that we can also feel very good about. ■

HOWARD GARDNER INDIA TOUR 2012

A 3 Week 5 City Tour in India

Dr Gardner will undertake a 3 week and a 5 city tour between January and February 2012. He will be accompanied by his wife and collaborator Prof Ellen Winner, herself a gifted expert on children. The tour will include an array of public speaking dialogues, policy dialogues, and deliberations with intellectuals and the media.

Drawing from his more than 4 decades of work Dr Gardner will speak on a number of topics including Multiple intelligences, Teaching for understanding, Good Work – Meeting of Ethics and Excellence. Prof Ellen Winner will give a selected set of Public Talks on her areas of specialisation – Nurturing Gifted children, Cognition of the Arts.

For more information visit: <http://www.howardgardnerindiatour.com/>



Photo: Imogen Scott-Henrichs

NATHALIE LUETHI PETERSON

Meet the woman who started the famous LPC summer camps in the US and Europe, successfully ran an international boarding school, *École d'humanité* for nearly four decades and started emancipation camps and actively participated in the women's movement besides raising four children. Our writer spent three weeks with this marvelous octogenarian unravelling her wonderful journey.

by Shagufta Siddhi

Natalie Luethi Peterson, 84, wears many hats. Natalie lives in Hasliberg, Switzerland in a house where the windows frame a panorama of snow-capped Alps. Although Hasliberg has been home for over fifty years for this American, a place of deep significance, she confesses that there is a world beyond the mountains that she likes as well. "At times, one feels that the mountains obstruct the endless space," she tells me.

Natalie Luethi-Peterson started the famous Luethi Peterson Camps (LPC) summer camps in 1948. She has run an international boarding school, *École d'Humanité*, Hasliberg, for nearly 4 decades, initiated women emancipation camps, and has been an active participant in the women's movement. She and her husband Armin have also raised four children.

My first meeting with Natalie was at a folkdance where she was dancing to the happy beats of the music. She hopped around, swinging her arms, moving with teenagers in synchronous steps. This was one of the first among many meetings with Natalie. I was drawn to her calm and composed exterior. During the course of my time at *École d'Humanité*, an international school in Hasliberg, Switzerland where I taught for a term, I learnt that Natalie is among the most

active and undisputedly loved members of the École community. My relationship with Natalie grew strong over several frauen meetings (weekly women's group meetings at the École) where women of the École community sit together and talk, share and raise issues that they feel are important to them as women and therefore be raised with women students. During the formal and informal exchange, Natalie and I made during my time at the École, I realized that age has made her stronger and more resolute.

Born in Cleveland, Ohio, to an "all-American" couple, Natalie recalls her childhood as exciting. "My mother was a daughter of an oil man in Pennsylvania—an oil man who drilled for oil, not one who owned oil!" When Natalie was teenager, her mother read about a fire that had burnt down the main building of Wellesley College in 1914. After reading an article on how the students of Wellesley went about restoring the building to the best of their ability, Natalie's mother became determined to study at America's premier college for women. There were obstacles of course: the high school in the town where Natalie's mother studied had not produced a single student who made it to college. "Mother had to be tutored in Latin and, capable as she was, she got selected at the college to study English literature."

A large part of our childhood was spent hearing our mother's tales of her years at Wellesley College (graduated in 1921). She played all the songs she had learnt at Wellesley on the piano for us and we sang together, somewhat off tune, but we knew them all." Natalie fondly remembers how her mother would take her and her siblings to watch plays at the Cleveland Museum of Art. Though her mother, like many other graduates from top women's colleges, did not follow an active career, her inner fire found expression in raising and educating her three children. She took an active interest in their education and homeschooled them for many years. Among other books that Natalie remembers from her schooling, a series of books about children in different countries of the world holds a special place in her heart. (These included books by Madeline Brandeis 'Children of America' and 'Children of All Lands' and Lucy Fitch Perkins (1865-1937), who wrote a series of children's books known as 'The Twin Books' published by the Riverside Press of Cambridge, MA.)



LPC is also present in Wino, Czech Republic

Young Natalie's deep wish was to go out and meet these other children of the world. Natalie says, "My father was a tractor salesman but had learnt to fly. He had wanted to fly in World War I but by the time he finished his flying training, the war was over. Heartbroken then, he could not miss the opportunity during World War II and much my mother's anguish, he joined the war. I remember that he used to fly these ancient planes for practice and would take us up and since these planes were open, you could lean out and see cows and things below."

The Peterson children moved many places following their father's ambition graph. Later Natalie's older sister, Irine went to study at her mother's alma mater, Wellesley College. During Irine's summer vacation at college, the two sisters decided to start a child care center for their town in Rhode Island. Natalie was 15 and her sister 17. Somehow, it all fell in place. "It was war time and many military men's wives needed a child care centre during their work hours. I had been baby-sitting before and loved it. So, my sister and I telephoned around town and got ourselves a bunch of kids to take care of. The first summer we had ten or twelve kids and it was just the two of us to look after them. We would take the kids to the beach and stay on the beach for long hours teaching them to swim." The Peterson girls' summer camp/child care center became popular. The following year, the two young girls had to employ some teenagers to help them run the day care. "They ran the camp for five years. I learnt an awful lot running it. We learnt about organization, plans, setting programmes,

"It was war time and many military men's wives needed child care during their work hours. I had been baby-sitting before and loved it. So, my sister and I telephoned around town and got ourselves a bunch of kids to take care of."



The LPC Summer Camps Logo



LPC (Freedom) at New Hampshire, USA

Natalie Peterson (left) and Pavey Lupton (right)
Photo: courtesy LPC International

The young Britons, Germans, French that they met deeply resented the Swiss and their easy life. There was also the blanket hatred for the Germans. All this provoked Natalie and her friend Pavey to contribute in the process of reconstruction of Europe.

back-up plans and book keeping. "We also made enough money to contribute to our college education," Natalie adds with a smile.

Natalie was not eager to attend college; her sole interest then was in writing. She had written plays and even musicals for the summer camps in Rhode Island. When it came time to choose a college after high school, she initially considered applying to acting school. But ultimately she opted for the path of least resistance and attended Wellesley like the two other women in her family. At college, Natalie, for reasons she still cannot explain, decided to study German. "It was 1944 and the Germans were the enemy. I read somewhere that according to statistics, interest in the language of the enemy goes high during the war but for me it was clearly not the reason. I had learnt French in high school and wanted to learn a new language in college."

Before the war, there was a practice at Wellesley that students of European languages spent a substantial part of their junior year abroad. The practice was discontinued during the war years, so it was Natalie's good fortune that the war ended right after her junior year at college. Theirs was the first batch to travel abroad after the war. Since Germany and Austria were occupied countries at that time, Wellesley College instead sent their students to Zurich, a German-speaking city in Switzerland.

It was during her year in Switzerland that Natalie saw the total destruction that the war had brought to Europe. She and the other American students on the programme had felt the war in the U.S. partially, almost on a

second-hand basis. Some of their friends and acquaintances were killed in it; Natalie's roommate had lost her boyfriend to the war. But the American students in Zurich had never experienced the physical destruction that war brings. Seeing the irrevocable loss and damage, the young college students were profoundly shocked.

Natalie and her friends also felt that though the war between nations was over, it was living on in the hearts of people. People were bitter about their former enemies. Switzerland after the war was a safe haven for people from all over Europe who migrated to get away from a scarred existence in their impoverished countries. Young Britons, Germans, and French that the Wellesley girls met that year deeply resented the Swiss and their easy life. There was also a blanket hatred for the Germans. All this provoked Natalie and her friend and class mate at Wellesley, Pavey to think about contributing to the reconstruction of Europe. Their horror at seeing such destruction and hatred led them to explore the idea of fighting prejudice. They felt they could work with children who were still young and not too set in their minds. The two girls wanted to do something that would bring children from different countries, whether friends or rivals, together for some time and create a platform for them to appreciate one another.

Without much deliberation, Pavey and Natalie decided to start a summer camp for children from different nationalities. They wanted to do something on the lines of the Peterson girls' summer day care camp in Rhode Island. The two friends were quite unclear about the nitty-gritty of this international venture, but they were determined that they would give the project their best shot. On returning to Wellesley College, they spoke with various important people about this matter. They raised the subject with the President of Wellesley College and the American Friends Service Committee. The girls got a chance to put their thoughts before a larger audience when they were invited to speak at Women's League for Peace and Freedom, a prestigious women's organization that had tried to stop World War I. The young women received moral support, practical advice and encouragement, but they were unable to raise any serious money.

Without any funds, yet still not dispirited, Natalie and Pavey left for Europe after their

graduation. They chose to each focus on different countries in Europe, one opting to go to England and the other Germany. Natalie says, "We had worked out details of the camp and were constantly in communication with each other. We had hoped for our camp to have four children each from Holland, Germany, United States, Austria, Switzerland and England but our plans did not always fall in place."

The first camp was planned to be set in Switzerland because Pavey and Natalie had friends and contacts there. Over the course of a year, they found a house for rent, just outside of Zurich, where they would put up the children. They had also found the people who would be counselors and work at the camp. They had only one problem: how would they financially support their project? Natalie even tried unconventional methods like selling her return ticket to United States and befriending American Army officers to get free American cigarettes that were worth gold in post-war Germany.

"While still hoping to track down support for the summer camp project, Natalie worked for some time with the Experiment in International Living. Natalie found herself a job as a praktikantin (an intern) at the famous 'Odenwaldschule' in South Germany. It took a brake failure during a car ride with Pavey in Switzerland; however, for the miracle they needed to get their project off the ground. The breakdown led the girls to stay overnight with the Geheebbs, the founders of Odenwaldschule and the École d'Humanité in Switzerland. The two got a chance to speak about their project with Geheebbs during this night stay. This dramatic first meeting was the beginning of a lasting relationship between Natalie and the Geheebbs. Natalie was hired to work as a teacher at École d'Humanité."

Then, soon after this incident, an unexpected donation of \$ 500 (with a promise to send another \$ 500) came from a donor unfamiliar to the two girls. The donor's name was Mrs. Maori and she had heard about these two determined girls from Krishna Roy, an Indian student at Wellesley. After support started to come from different corners, Natalie's parents proactively supported the camp. They even set up an organization to raise donations. With enough money to run two camps, the girls set out to fulfill their dreams.

The camp house outside Zurich that Natalie and Pavey had chosen once belonged to the



LPC in Hegnes, Norway

Socialist Party; a big bust of Karl Marx stood on its veranda. Before the camp began, the two Americans promptly moved the famed economist's bust to the cellar!

Natalie's experience as a teacher at the École (a school set up by the Geheebbs in Switzerland after they fled Nazi Germany) and the Odenwaldschule helped in creating a basic structure of the camp. "It helped me to have had this experience. I learnt about principles of working at an organization. Working with children had also become like second nature. A lot of things I had experienced and liked at these two schools were incorporated in the camp programme. They are more or less the same until today."

"The campers were grouped as families with adult/s (counselors?) as family heads at the camp. Everyone at the camp, including children, was equally involved in the cleaning, cooking and laundry, just as they were in learning sports, music, folk dancing, craft or any other skill. For Natalie and Pavey, "the idea of a community of adults and children where everybody, every single member is responsible and needs to do his or her part to keep things going for oneself and others, each member works at solving conflicts and overcoming difficulties together, was important." The first camp was a great success and the two organizers learnt crucial lessons.

The first campers in 1949, just like LPC (Luethi Peterson Camps) campers today, stayed for 8 weeks starting August 1. "Since we had 6 nationalities, we envisaged a national week at the camps. We had written to the students beforehand about preparing a

One of the early miracles came in form of a car brakes failure leading the girls to stay overnight with the Geheebbs, founders of Odenwaldschule and École d'Humanité in Switzerland. This dramatic first meeting was the beginning to a lasting relationship. Soon after, a generous donation of \$500 with a promise to send another \$500 came from a virtually unknown source.



LPC in Saint-Sulpice, Switzerland

The camps success kept LPC camps going and today the camps have spread like wild fire. LPC expanded to the United States bringing Native American and Afro-American children together with middle class white American children.

presentation and bringing souvenirs from their country and also teaching a regional/national meal. When the first batch of kids arrived at the camp, they brought postcards and other articles from their countries."

Arguments started when the children glorified their countries. "I remember one German boy spoke about the tallest light house in Europe being in Germany while the Dutch boy snapped back that the tallest light house was in Holland." A story that Natalie recounts about the issues on the very first camp is that of a German boy and a Dutch boy falling in love with the same English girl—"that was one international issue we had!" Lessons were learnt, from the second camp on; national weeks were a total no-no. The children could instead put up a play or teach games popular in their countries. "We learnt that dancing, singing and eating together or anything non-competitive was wonderful."

Like today at the LPC camps, campers could choose from a variety of skill-based courses like baking breads and cakes, dark room photography, sports or even yoga. Once a week the families (the camp was divided into families under a family head) at the camp would go out on a family activity. The chores were rotated so that everyone learnt almost everything. Though the camp organizers spoke mostly German, they would send reports of the individual child to their parents in English. "The reports were mostly about the child's strengths and areas of interest."

Natalie still marvels at the parents' faith in the two inexperienced, young foreigners. Today,

LPC has a Board of Governors with clear policies on recruitment and programs. These days every counselor needs a police clearance certificate. Back in 1949, the clearances were of another kind.

Natalie, Pavey, and the parents of the campers had to cross dense networks of red tape to get the children into Switzerland. "One of our former campers, now an old man, gave me at one point all the correspondence his father had with the police and all kinds of bureaus to get him to Switzerland, to the camp. It was not easy from the point of view of the struggle with the officialdom. But somehow it happened, we managed to do it and the kids loved it."

A few years ago, the first campers had a reunion in Switzerland. Natalie is proud of the fact that LPC campers continue to stay in touch with each other and many of them return as mature campers or even helpers at the camps. Take the instance of former director of École d'Humanité, Sarah Hudspith. Sarah first met Natalie at a LPC camp as a young camper from England. She has since then served LPC in a variety of roles.

Pavey, Natalie's partner got married and left Europe after the very first camp year. All alone, Natalie continued her struggle. She found support in family, friends and Armin Luethi, a colleague, who later became her husband.

Back in the United States, the camp was supported by its Board of Directors, mostly Natalie's family and friends in Rhode Island, who helped in bringing donations and by sending Americans to the camp. In the early days the camp was known as Young Leaders International, but during the McCarthy era, in the 50s, the word "international" in the camp's name made it a subject of suspicion. So they elected to change the name. "The name Luethi Peterson Camps was a combination of my name and Armin's. It was certainly not my choice and before I could send an alternative to Young Leaders International, the panic-stricken Board of Directors had changed it. The name LPC continues." The success kept LPC going and today the camps have spread all over Europe and in the US. For Natalie, it was a dream that LPC expand to the United States and bring Native American and Afro-American children together with middle-class white American children.

Certain events like the political situation of Europe in the 1960s created some drama for the LPC camps. LPC tried to get Russian children together with American ones at the camps in Europe but they could not make any headway. In 1968, LPC was ready to set up their first camp in Prague, Czechoslovakia, when the 'Prague Spring' happened. During the camp, Soviet tanks rolled into the Czech capital and LPC campers in Prague were inadvertently involved in an interesting adventure. The campers escaped by hitchhiking from the Swedish Embassy in Prague through Germany to Scandinavia. One of the next big events happened in 1969 when the first LPC camp was set up in Yugoslavia. It was a success, the first major LPC step towards Eastern Europe when the Iron Curtain was still up.

But Natalie was only a camp organizer part-time. Her career as an educator had started at the Odenwaldschule in Germany, but it was at École d'Humanité that she flowered as a teacher. Natalie and Armin joined the École as teachers in 1956 and eventually became directors of the Geheeb school in 1961. Natalie's big success as the École director lies in starting the American Programme at the school alongside the Swiss Matura system. She built the institution into the truly international school that it is today. Drawing on her skills as a camp coordinator, she used unconventional means to bring teachers from US colleges to teach at the École. She was an expert in running the show on a limited budget while keeping the spirit of the École alive. Natalie and Armin have resuscitated the École several times in a variety of ways. One was to invite an established educator and a psychologist Ruth Cohn to teach her communication method, TCI (Theme-Centered Interaction) at the École. Natalie and Armin were later succeeded by a group of leaders as directors of the École. Natalie continues to teach at the school.

One of the other roles that Natalie has played is to spearhead the women's emancipation movement. "It all started after a teacher and I heard Simone de Beauvoir on television. We were fired up by her speech and decided to do something at the École. We knew about the women's groups, at that time called the consciousness raising groups, and felt that we could have a women's group at the École that could work like these consciousness raising groups."

The women's group has continued for years and the École women meet every Tuesday. The women's group also tried to get a men's group together but it never took off. "We had many things on our agenda like small things that may seem ridiculous to the younger generation." Amongst the issues they tackled, the group addressed sexist vocabulary used at the École. "Due to the spread of the feminist movement, advertisements in many parts of the world were gender-free but at the École we continued to use the sexist words. So, the members of the women's group got up at the Schulgemeinde, a mixed platform of students and teachers at the École, and declared that we would like to use the feminine form which also includes masculine form. I personally believe you cannot think without a language and if you are thinking in terms of masculine forms, you are excluding yourself and all of your gender and it can have a subconscious effect that you do not take yourself or your co-women as seriously as men." Slowly, the women's group found ways to say neutral gender words.

Natalie looks at the mountains from her chair and says, "I would always call myself first a teacher. I have also enjoyed everything I did. But one thing I would like to say to young educators is to get to know your students personally, in any way you can and see if you can inspire your kids to get to know themselves too. Also, do not get into the job unless you like children or teenagers!" ■

But Natalie was only a part time camp organizer. Her career as an educator started at the Odenwaldschule in Germany but it was at École d'Humanité that she flowered as a teacher. Natalie and her husband joined the École as teachers' in 1956 and eventually became directors of the Geheeb school in 1961.



SHAGUFTA SIDDHI is a cultural historian and educator. Works with the Krishnamurti Foundation, India. After abandoning a secure life in the medieval ramparts of Dillli, she

is trying to make sense of life and living in Banaras. If you happen to be wandering in the labyrinthine lanes of Banaras, there are high chances of finding her almost always at a chai shop speaking in an accented Bhojpuri with a bunch of Banarasis.

EXCLUSIVE

A FEAST OF FRIENDS

Amole Gupte talks about what it took to make the delectable 'Stanley ka Dabba.'

Interview: Amruta Patil
Photos: Courtesy Amole Gupte





Left: A Still from Stanley Ka Dabba

Why did you make the decision to put the dabba at the heart of matters in your storyline?

When addressing the 'hunger' of the non-privileged, the most direct and useful metaphor to drive the issue into the hearts and minds of the viewers for me was the lunch-box – The Dabba – Everyone has a Dabba!

I went to the same school that's seen in the film. And there was a Stanley in class with us. And in the sixth grade, when we moved into the new school building, morning school turned into day school and the need for the dabba arose. Stanley unfailingly brought to school everyday, 'aloo ki rassewali subzi and puri' in a bent aluminum 2-tiered tiffin-box. The smells drove us crazy when he opened the lid in the long recess. But why the same, wonderful stuff everyday?

His story was, that on his way to school, a street Hindu hotel friend filled up his box with the regimental aloo-puri breakfast on menu for free. That was 38 years ago, but the aroma and Stanley's tale, both remained fresh enough to kick-start the screenplay of Stanley Ka Dabba.

What was the nature of SKD workshops and how did the children benefit from them?

This is an aside, but it will help you understand the model. For 4 years I have been fuelling a cinema and theatre studies class in Pali Chimbai Municipal School in Bandra, Mumbai. The idea was to introduce cinema and stagecraft as a holiday subject to the non-privileged, financially challenged child. The intention? To catalyze a strong desire in the child (age 6 to 16) to jump her social class and move towards being an artist, a creator, who will eventually join the media stream, be it cinema, theatre or TV. After all, it's not rocket science that one needs to wait until post-grad to gain knowledge. Chaplin, Majidi and a cache of filmmakers are our gurus and their films our textbooks. Add to this, film theory and theatre exercises for breath, eye, voice and posture.

The children made 2 short films in two summers. Their first, Aansoo baney moti, was showcased with Megan Mylan's 'Smile Pinky' at the 1st Children's International Film Festival Mumbai 2009.



Anurag Kashyap with his actors at the sets of *Stanley Ka Dabba* | Anurag also played the role of the Hindi teacher, Khadoos (Next page bottom picture)

All together, through one and a half years of the Stanley sessions, 170 children participated at-will. Some came barely for a day or two. But since the class was voluntary, there was no binding on any child to attend, having thrown the weight of following continuity out of the window.

This sturdy classroom model of in-school holiday education, I brought into Holy Family High School. Most of SKD was scripted from memories embedded in those very walls, though the children of my time are touching 50. I ran the idea of a voluntary Saturday holiday morning class with my Head Mistress, Mrs. Asha Kapoor. She, in turn, proposed it to the School Principal, Father Francis Swami, who was delighted by the idea of sessioning the screenplay of *Stanley Ka Dabba* with the school children. He sent information notices to all classes inviting children to a free and voluntary Saturday class of 4 hours with 2 recesses.

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the class was voluntary, there was no binding on any child to attend, having thrown the weight of following continuity out of the window. All the 170 children have received a fee-waiver scholarship for this academic year as a return gift from my production house. As for the climax concert, I set up Partho's Besant Montessori School concert, rehearsed it in their school timings and did a single take of the performance with actual parents, teachers and children.

And what happened on all Saturday mornings at Holy Family High School was nothing less than magic, where the pace and mood of the sessions were determined by the children. Every Saturday wasn't necessarily a filming Saturday. Theatre exercises and cinema viewing was part of the knowledge sharing.

Also, the hardbound script of SKD was purposely forgotten at home in order to session the narrative in the old raconteur tradition. This discouraged mugging up script lines and encouraged cooking up your own lines after listening to the scene enacted by me – just like grandmother enacting scenes from the Mahabharata. And the winner – No lights in the shooting space. The Canon 7D, a digital still camera with a motion capture card and its user Amol Gole brought in Stanley Ka Dabba without the cumbersome paraphernalia of lights. This set the children free! An innocuous still camera without lights cannot distract children from showing their best in child friendly timings. That is the big lesson.

How did you maintain the spontaneity of performance with such kind of time lapses?

As I said before, there were no lights and no humongous cameras to thwart the progress of emotions of both children and adults. There was no artifice in the spaces, barring the little camera and the synch sound mikes. Most scenes actually took real-time to shoot. An emotion that came to the fore in a scene was never carried to the next Saturday session. It was wrapped in that very session. In most shots, the rehearsal was the pristine take. The progress of the story was always in tandem with the filming of the script. And the surprises of fallen milk teeth, bruises and cuts of Stanley and friends were happily included to enrich and authenticate the screenplay.

Candidness was nurtured against 'perfection' – when the Lord gives, you need to be in a candid position to receive, never the rigidity of preset perfection. Being instead of seeming! And that's what children are – the most effortless interpreters of life. In SKD, we adults benefitted by observing them and repeating their processes in our roles. That is why it all looks so spontaneous – because it is.



If this was not originally intended to be a film, how did you weave together a narrative from your footage?

In 2008 I was ready to go on floor with a film on inequality; its songs and breakdowns and budgets and schedules in place. The path of Sapnon Ko Ginte Ginte was riddled with mines, and walking it was made impossible for me. That's when I went deep inside and pulled out Stanley Ka Dabba and put it on paper. Twice bitten, thrice shy – when I took SKD into session to Holy Family School, I promised myself – Not to promise the world a feature film.

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A still from the film - Stanley played by Partho, with friends

...my stature in the eyes of my children friends, is that of a frog's. I am 'a mole frog' and that is not daunting at all to them. And the friendship is not for gain. I am not extracting anything slyly from them. I don't kid-glove my friends. That way I feel I am a child myself.

Instead, do it in the spirit of the promised Saturday sessions and see if anything got built over time.

After loading material on Deepa's edit machine over a period of 6 months, she began looking into its form. She put together 20 minutes of the 1st half and it rocked for the people who saw it. Hugely relieved, we chugged ahead with the filming of the rest of the narrative. It was a 90 minutes narrative from the beginning. We lost some written moments... we gained some candid moments.

Tell us how you managed what the biggest of Indian directors have mostly failed to do - get the children to be seemingly oblivious of the camera. The children never hit a false note in their performance!

One, my stature in the eyes of my children friends, is that of a frog's. I am 'a mole frog' and that is not daunting at all to them. And the friendship is not for gain. I am not extracting anything slyly from them. I don't kid-glove my friends. That way I feel I am a child myself. I do fight with them and get argumentative.

Two, when Neil Sadwelkar, our Technical Head assured Amol Gole and Deepa and me on that day in September 2009, that the little Cannon 7D would give result and past the test of the silver screen. Bless Neil for this... because, without the lights and the huge, immobile Arriflex 535 sound blimped camera, the children were literally liberated from the shackles of formatted and time-consuming filmmaking, where children are the prone 'smallies' in the food chain, eternally waiting and wilting

away before the Director Of Photography, after lighting up for hours, shouts out "I am ready for take!".

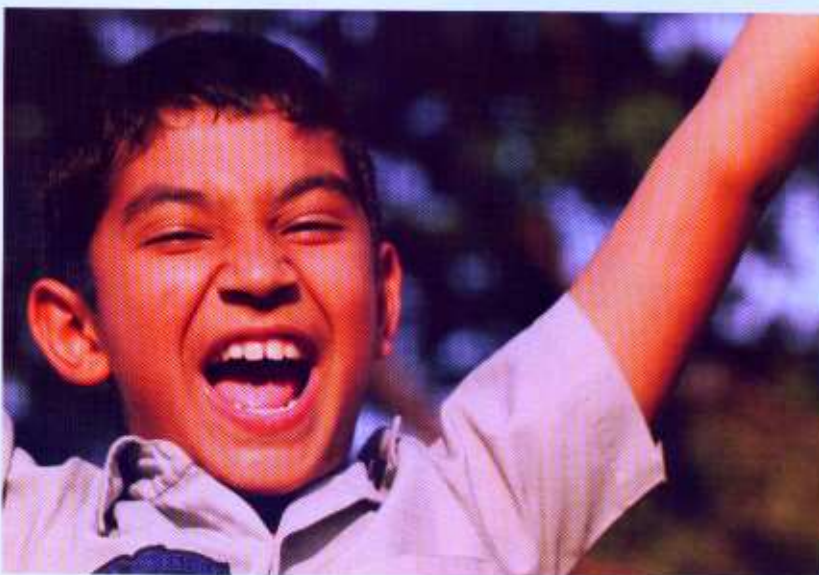
How did you work towards minimizing exposure-risk and groom the attitude of young actors during the process?

With able support from Father Swami, the Principal of Holy Family High School it was possible to speak to children and parents at length about the perils of media exploitation of children. I cited examples of popular children's talent shows on TV where the tears of the loser were more TRP fetching than the smile of the winner – all trapped in exhausting 12 hour shifts and months long schedules, be it film, TV or advertising. Plus the peril of missing school, not for the academics, but for the childhood pleasure of being with same-age friends in class, vis-à-vis being all the time in the company of adults on a film or TV shooting.

Through the filming period of SKD we strictly enforced the rules – 4 hours on a Saturday (no Sundays) or a vacation day with two recesses inside the school without missing a single working day of school, where you can walk in and walk out as you please and be a beneficiary in a school activity. We found this a good example of child friendly filmmaking. If, in order to shoot with an animal it is mandatory to have an Animal Welfare Board person to supervise the proceedings, can't there be stricter laws for filming or televising children, like in the West?

SKD marks the rather strong debut of your son Partho. How do you, as a parent, place celluloid dreams in context?

Mindful of the pitfalls and traps awaiting children in commercial cinema, no sensible parent should cash cow their offspring. It would only lead to an irreparable loss of childhood.



Therefore it's a no no for Partho when it comes to anything outside of home. As far as strong debut and all that... neither Partho, nor Deepa, nor I see his participation in professional terms. It's the cinema and theatre learning process which is more important. Partho has been my Saturday buddy since he was 3. Be it concerts in special schools, be it the cinema and theatre studies class at Pali Chimbai Municipal School, or rehearsing with other child actors for Taare Zameen Par (TZP), Partho has been by my side and I value that bond very much... more than anything else in this world.

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Our dreams are
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Celluloid is merely
the means not
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About celluloid dreams... no dreams, we are tabling child-rights issues through cinema for a wider reach. Our dreams are connected with better success rates of social change. Celluloid is merely the means not the end.

Teachers are neither morose, nor dumb, much worse, they are numb. And it isn't their fault. If you have divisions A to F in each grade and every division has a minimum of 50 children and the system teachers are entrapped in, believes in rote and has banished the arts out of the curriculum, then they are going to behave like robots in class. Art is merely imitating life. And so, if life is

stereotypical, be it MBAs, quarter-profits believers or middle class teachers, art shall follow. Except in the case of the Nikumbhs of the world. But they are few. Others are in a tearing hurry to make children drink up the subject matter of textbooks and not life, with varying degrees of commitment to their 'noble profession'.

The fascinatingly ogre-ish Verma is but another Stanley – thought to myself why tell the story twice... also I went way past my tolerance in trying to give him a long-winded wind-up when I should have just let him disappear like ether from the school corridor post his realization.

Stanley Ka Dabba is special for us. And the collaboration with Deepa is the same as parenting Partho. Therefore, SKD is our 3rd child after Partho and TZP. Deepa Bhatia is a mountain of artistry, without whom I wouldn't move an inch in life and it needn't only mean up or down. And as far as debuts go... less said the better. ■

Stanley Ka Dabba is a Hindi film written, directed and produced by Amole Gupte. It was released on 13 May 2011. It traces the fictional story of Stanley, a very talented and popular fourth grader who never brings his *dabba* or lunchbox to school and is always found eating out of his friends' lunchboxes. A bunch of very disagreeable teachers make Stanley and his friends' lives miserable as they insist on impinging on their lunchtime bonding. Life becomes even more difficult when the Hindi teacher (Amole Gupte) forces Stanley to get his own *dabba* or stop coming to school. The question that looms "why does Stanley never get a his *dabba*?"

Learning by Doing

Training in theatre enhances a child's overall learning experience through techniques developed in the rehearsal room and helps children cultivate creative thinking and problem solving abilities, strong social and interpersonal skills, and strong communication skills through the training in theatre.



Photos: Theatre Professionals



The Theatre Professionals initiative is based on the simplest of premises: 'Drama' is simply learning by doing. It enables experiential learning and ensures there's also space for positive reflection relating to experiences.

How do you give children the confidence to negotiate the ever-changing world around them? By just telling them to become confident or by enabling them to experience and develop their own frames of reference?

With this as the objective a group of theatre professionals convened by London and Connecticut-trained Jehan Manekshaw started Theatre Professionals Pvt. Ltd, a Mumbai-based company to professionalise and improve the standards of practice for theatre in India. The prime objective of the company other than creating theatre

productions (estb. 2008) is to train actors, conduct capacity building workshops in the performing arts, and offer and execute complete drama syllabus and curriculum solutions in schools. Theatre Professionals believe that in drama classes and workshops, students literally put themselves in others' shoes which helps them realise the importance of compassion and empathy.

For a long time, the teaching of dramatics in schools has been misunderstood as teaching children to develop elocution skills – an activity that enables them to become better orators and public speakers and develop



Speech, diction or elocution is not the focus here nor is it taught here. Even the drama is in no didactic form. Instead kids are encouraged to discuss issues and things they observe around them without fear of being admonished or judged, they then use the discussion to develop concepts and work together to execute it into performance pieces.

confidence. Theatre Professionals believe in doing a little more than that by developing in the student the ability to stand up and perform in front of audiences.

Dramatics taught creatively does much more. At the most basic level, exercises and activities in a drama class enthralls children to become focused and more interested in the process of learning. At another level it gets them to understand and empathise with others. But most importantly regular application of dramatics exercises – taken from the rehearsals into classrooms – empowers every child in a sense that they become more capable of finding their own creative solutions to negotiate scenarios in the classroom and subsequently in life.

Although drama is not new in education, the ubiquitous speech and drama class has been offered as an elective or otherwise in many schools till date, but Theatre Professionals believe that they are slowly but surely changing the way drama is being used in education.

From just being a means to good speech or performance we think that the practice and discipline of drama can be used to teach children self-expression, creativity, collaboration and communication skills.

Which is why they conceived the Drama in Schools Program, which uses theatre exercises and techniques to engage children's mind, body and imaginations.

Speech, diction or elocution is not the focus here nor is it taught here. Even the drama is in no didactic form. Instead kids are encouraged to discuss issues and things they observe around them without fear of being admonished or judged, they then use the discussion to develop concepts and work together to execute it into performance pieces. Through a variety of fun exercises they are taught how to use their body, voice, creativity and energy to understand themselves better, connect with other children in the class, discuss and create together, build their own perspectives.

The results have been surprisingly very encouraging, and at times the trainers are often left astounded with the creativity and speed with which children respond to these unorthodox methods.

The program was evolved by a team of professional theatre practitioners who also love working with children. Their experience and background in theatre and arts and their interest in education drove them to evolve a new discourse in drama education in India. Theatre Professionals feel that by using the full power of theatre practices they can really put the exuberant energy and curiosity of children to constructive use.

The Theatre Professionals initiative is based on the simplest of premises: 'Drama' (the word itself stems from Latin root *to do*) is simply learning by doing. It enables experiential learning and ensures there's also space for positive reflection relating to experiences. Therefore, by encouraging learning by doing and post-event reflection and assessment, the study and teaching of dramatics can 'dramatically' improve classroom learning outcomes.



An example would perhaps help to demonstrate the power of teaching-learning dramatics. In class VII of one school there was a problem with focus. Often the curriculum is not challenging enough – especially for smarter children in the class. A characterisation exercise was conceptualised under which children adopt a character from the real world. All students selected and represented a character they observed in their everyday life, and studied how the chosen character walked, spoke, dressed, gestured and represented him/herself.

Each week they had to refine the chosen character a little more, always striving towards a closer representation of their chosen character. Sufficiently challenged, the students experienced the result of constant application to the task. Finally, after they had sufficiently mimicked and represented the chosen real-life character, they were asked to improvise situations in which their characters interacted with each other.

Consistent reflection and self-assessment of their work, is what professional actors do. Similar exercises create awareness among students of their own physical and psychological capabilities as individuals and as group performers. It deepens students' understanding and appreciation of the viewpoints of the characters they portray on stage. This is a first step towards learning to respect the views/characters of other children in class.

A drama class is a safe space for children to explore their thoughts and express them through action. It is a non-

judgmental space, where they will become less apprehensive about expressing their opinions or pursue a line of thought, while interpreting the characters they are asked to portray. In some schools Theatre Professionals do 'memory searches.' Students are encouraged to dig deep into their personal history to identify and understand their formative influences. Introspection and recollection of things in the past enables children to become comfortable with themselves and learn from the mistakes they may have made in the past.

Drama and role playing works because it is inclusive. There is so much stress in our education system on the written word that development of verbal

communication skills is often ignored. Because it is action oriented, dramatics education lets children express themselves verbally and gives children with lesser writing skills an outlet and opportunity to participate, shine and develop confidence. Especially for kinesthetic visual learners, drama lets them engage mind and body while developing the focus and creativity of children. It also develops the qualities of teamworking, learning to appreciate others and the ability to take constructive criticism. One such exercise called 'create a machine with your bodies' in classes teaches students to work towards common goals and learning to present group work.

Not surprisingly great teachers and seers like Sri Aurobindo and Nobel laureate Rabindranath Tagore were strong proponents of teaching through the arts. Their work and philosophy strongly advocates the integration of the arts as an integral component in the education for the development of the mind. They understood instinctively that learning by doing enables and builds the confidence of children to devise creative solutions to the known and unknown challenges of life. ■

With inputs from Sananda Mukhopadhyaya of the Theatre Professionals Drama in Schools Program

ABOUT THEATRE PROFESSIONALS

Theatre Professionals work to professionalise and improve the standards of practice for Theatre in India.

It is a Mumbai based Theatre Company that provides various professional services in the field of Theatre and Drama. They train actors, conduct capacity building workshops in the performing arts, and offer and execute complete syllabus and curriculum solutions in schools.

Their long term vision is to build and create trail-blazing and pilot initiatives that work towards a new standard of world-class theatre products made for Indian audiences who are hungry for new and exciting options in cultural entertainment.

The Drama in Schools Program is one of the many programs run by Theatre Professionals.

Their current focus is on improving capacity in the theatre industry:

- We advance the actor's practice through exposure to accomplished actors and directors from across the world.
- We design engagements for theatre directors and designers to develop training in theatre pedagogy and stagecraft design.
- We consult for existing performing arts organisations seeking to execute their vision, and improve on administration and organizational development.
- We bring the benefits of theatre practice and methods to the fields of child-education and adult-training.

Check out their website:

<http://www.theatreprofessionals.co.in>

WHY WE NEED MUSIC

Are there any benefits to learning or appreciating music apart from the fact that it is an enjoyable pastime?

by Luke Haokip



I personally don't know anybody who doesn't like music. We do not know why we like music and yet every day we are immersed in it for hours. Even the most tone-deaf of people or the very small percentage of people who profess they do not like music are found humming a tune in the shower or while working, completely unaware that they are indulging in this most ethereal medium.

When one thinks of music, the images conjured up are usually that of peace, harmony and brotherhood - most connotations to music are positive ones. And while most people wouldn't mind the occasional dabbling in it, if they had to take time out to learn music, it would only be out of indulgence or so they feel. The questions, therefore, that arise in most people's mind, especially those with young children, are

ones that question the practical aspects of learning music. Why must we learn music, or rather, why must our children learn music? Are there any benefits to learning or appreciating music apart from the fact that it is an enjoyable pastime or unless you want your child to become a professional musician? Will it help my child become cleverer? Will it help her in other aspects of her life especially in a non-music profession? Literature can hone one to be a good writer and hence a journalist or even a television producer, mathematics can perhaps one day help in becoming a better engineer, economics could lead to a career in banking.

Every system of education is trying to educate in order to have a pool of employable people eventually, not a bad thing in itself, but in such an environment sometimes music seems a little out of place and even

unnecessary. There seems to be no reason to learn music formally unless you want to be a professional musician. And it also seems to take a lot of time and effort to learn music.

Steven Pinker, the famed American psychologist and cognitive scientist, has referred to music as being a "pure pleasure technology" with no real function. And then most would argue it otherwise. But Pinker's statement is part of a larger argument and he is in no ways belittling music - that perhaps for a later time.

The ancient Greeks had a fascinating way of articulating how music works and why it is required. In their quadrivium or medieval university curriculum consisting of geometry, arithmetic, astronomy, and music - astronomy and music were two sides of the same coin. Astronomy described relationships between observable, external, permanent objects and music illuminated relationships between invisible, internal, transient objects. "I imagine us having internal planets, constellations of complicated thoughts and feelings. Music finds the invisible pieces inside our hearts and souls and helps describe the position of things inside us, like a telescope that looks in rather than out," wrote Karl Paulnack in an article in CS Monitor.

This is what Marvin Minsky, one of the pioneers of artificial intelligence and cognitive psychology, has to say regarding why we may need music, "Why on earth should anyone want to learn such things? Geometry is practical—for building pyramids, for instance—but of what use is musical knowledge? Here is one idea. Each child spends endless days in curious ways; we call this play. A child stacks and packs all kinds of blocks and boxes, lines them up, and knocks them down. What is that all about? Clearly, the child is learning about space! But how on earth does one learn about time? Can one time fit inside another? Can two of them go side by side? In music, we find out!"

Then there are those who say that music is necessary to us evolutionarily speaking - like language. It is something that we needed so

we evolved it or evolved into it - that humans had a genetic disposition to music that is why we developed it. Probably like the way we took to speaking because evolutionarily we needed to communicate. And then there are those who say that music needs to be cultivated.

Music is a big subject with many genres - what is music to some may be to others a random physiological dissonance and because they are not familiar with it it is construed as general cacophony. For example contorted serial sequences in atonal music are generally too complex for the brain to recognize unless we are familiar with the score and that too backwards! It's the same with any new form of music we dabble in - either playing it or just listening to it. Initially it all seems really chaotic - let's take for example Jazz or Carnatic music, to the uninitiated it will sound like a market place full of musicians playing to their own beats. But slowly as you let it seep into you, you get familiar with the tones, the scales and voila! one day you are sitting in your balcony and enjoying that music.

"Whether music is necessary or not, we still enjoy it first and foremost, and if it were taken away we would have different brains as a result. Music is at the very heart of what it means to be human, and we need science to help us understand this, not to explain it away," argues Philip Ball, the prizewinning science writer and author of *The Music Instinct*.

But then, can everyone learn music and if they can should they? Since the benefits of music perhaps is felt most by people who understand it a little more - people who play a musical instrument or sing, those who have learnt music either formally or informally, I personally feel, yes. I do not know what the solution could be for people who say they do not have a musical bone in them or people who are tone-deaf, there seem to be a lot of people like that, but for the rest of us who can, perhaps if we are willing to put through the rigours of music training - there's a lot of bliss waiting for us on the other side of that training.

Whether music is necessary or not, we still enjoy it first and foremost, and if it were taken away we would have different brains as a result. Music is at the very heart of what it means to be human, and we need science to help us understand this, not to explain it away.

Evolutionary trait or not – there's no denying that there are some compelling reasons why music is necessary in our lives and therefore, we must listen to music, play music, teach music and facilitate the learning, sharing and listening of this auditory cheesecake.

Evolutionary trait or not, there's no denying that there are some compelling reasons why music is necessary in our lives and therefore, we must listen to music, play music, teach music and facilitate the learning, sharing and listening of this auditory cheesecake. And the only thing that it will fatten, is the soul – for the better!

Whatever the origins of music be and how and who can learn music notwithstanding, why we need it and how we benefit from it is possibly a lot easier to explain.

MUSIC MAKES YOU SMARTER

Several studies conducted on the effects of music to the brain have revealed that children, who are exposed to music, or those who play an instrument, do better in school than those who don't. It could well be a reverse for that matter – that the children who are actually smart are picking up music and doing well in it.

But these researches also suggest that exposure to music benefits a child's reading age, IQ and the development of certain parts of the brain. For that matter it says even adults can gain from learning to play an instrument or sing as it helps the mind to be alert and remain active and in due course help to sharpen the memory.

Many of us have heard of the Mozart Effect. Apparently listening to Mozart's music betters some kinds of mental performance – albeit short term. And there are recent reports how music improves the brain and heals the body. Researchers at McGill University in Montreal, Canada, have conducted studies, which claim that music can simulate certain parts of one's brain responsible for memory, motor control, timing and language depending on the kind of music you listen to.

A rich environment, and in this case the environment of music, seems to make the difference. Learning music requires effort, an effort that makes one use their brain. The more you use and educate the brain the more interconnections in the brain, changing it for the better. So in effect, music makes the brain function better.

MUSIC TEACHES DISCIPLINE AND A STRONG WORK ETHIC

Learning music is hard work. It teaches patience and discipline. The drive to learn music may come from wanting to become popular or a desire to fit into a clique but one will have to work hard to eventually get to a level where one can actually start being appreciated.

There have been children who seemed musically gifted and full of potential when they were younger but over the years have stayed at that level because they didn't work hard enough or didn't get enough opportunity. Those who had been encouraged have benefited. The discipline meted out to learning has translated into understanding the benefits of hard work and discipline. Many then are able to successfully translate that into other aspects of their lives. For example learning music theory can improve problem solving and logic skills and therefore help a child do mathematics. That probably is a convoluted way of putting things and perhaps not every good musician is good in mathematics but the point here is that it unleashes the potential in the child for similar tasks. How one can then hone an interest in mathematics in the child is another matter altogether.

Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, the renowned psychology professor, in his book on creativity talks about having to pay a price for creativity. Creativity, he says, is not something that comes to you as a feeling or as a biological evolution. The price, he says, is expertise in that domain where creativity is expected. It's only after you have mastered the systems and its traditions can you make any creative change. Similarly, in order to make new music, one has to necessarily learn its traditions. In order to do away with conventions you need to understand the conventions.

Learning music is like learning anything else – a lot of hard work. But it shows very tangible results and has many more apparent benefits than most of other tasks and we should use this fact to its advantage and propagate the learning and teaching of it.

MUSIC RELIEVES STRESS

It is well established, and for this we do not need to refer to an academic or scientific authority, that music has unique powers when it comes to soothing us and relieving stress. Listening to slow Classical Music, Indian or Western, can have a tremendously relaxing effect to our minds and as a result to our bodies. Some people can listen to other forms and genres of music and get the same effect too – this may be a matter of taste or exposure.

Music absorbs our attention and acts as a pleasant distraction and it can help us explore our emotions. It is a great aide to meditation and can help us refocus and it is so ubiquitous these days, everyone has access to personal music players, in form of iPods, mp3 players or mobile phones. And if one can sing or play a musical instrument then one can use that as a stress relief tool too.

Researchers at McGill University have for the first time located specific areas of mental activity linked to emotional responses to music. Music can then simulate parts of the brain that are underactive in neurological diseases or a variety of emotional disorders. Over time, we could retrain the brain in these disorders. Harvard University Medical School neurobiologist, Mark Jude Tramo, says that "Undeniably, there is a biology of music. There is no question that there is specialization within the human brain for the processing of music. Music is biologically part of human life, just as music is aesthetically part of human life."

Music, therefore, is not just an incredibly wonderful pastime, which also has the ability to make us smarter, it also helps alleviate stress and help us in our efforts at leading a healthy life mentally.

MUSIC INSTILLS IN US A SENSE OF ACHIEVEMENT

Learning music is in many ways a solitary discipline. You can share music, listen to it with a group or be part of a group because of your musical tastes. But when learning music you are essentially all alone, since everyone learns at their own pace.

Personal landmarks and achievements can tremendously boost a child's confidence. It is important though to impress upon them that one must not compete with others, rather make one's own small goals. A new piece of music may be a pleasure to listen to but learning it a completely different ball game. When finally learnt after much toil, the sense of satisfaction is invaluable. That is what makes us want to better again and again. Of course there will be the satisfaction of having the approval of one's parents, friends and teachers but the satisfaction of having been able to do it will be priceless – an achievement which will be their very own.

IT HELPS US BOND WITH PEERS, TEACHERS AND FAMILY

Music helps bond with others no matter what age. That is one function of music that probably comes most naturally to most people especially the young. And learning music can be a life changing experience.

On one level one will bond with peers but then as one gets more proficient you realize that your musical peers are all those who understand your brand of music. Lasting friendships are made this way not only with classmates but also with others, younger and older, especially teachers.

So then, hopefully, we have established that there is something to music - isn't it why when something pleasurable or nice happens we say, "that's music to my ears," giving it such an elevated position. Just these few points above make it worth the while to appreciate, learn, share and facilitate music in our lives and in the lives of others, and that we are better with it than without it. ■

Undeniably, there is a biology of music. There is no question that there is specialization within the human brain for the processing of music. Music is biologically part of human life, just as music is aesthetically part of human life.

WINNING WAYS of Development IN SCHOOLS

With the welcome clarity that this professionalism has brought in its wake, many schools and groups of schools must now opt for regular school assessment and evaluation of its people and processes, to be followed by need-based school improvement plans that will govern their professional activity purposefully over a minimum period of three-five years for visible and sustainable result.

by Shobana Verghese

Right through the thirty-five years I spent in the teaching-learning space in schools in India and abroad, my heart skipped a beat and my knees knocked themselves silly whenever talk surfaced in the staffroom about teachers' assessment and evaluation. It was generally unprofessional since it neither referred to a stated vision nor to any individual or institutional achievement or developmental goals. In the mid-seventies when I entered the arena as a young teacher with two very bright eyes and an equally bright spirit, my heart rarely raced into overdrive since this ordeal was rare.

As the years passed my understanding of the teaching-learning process broadened too. And in hindsight, I now know that I was instinctively and simultaneously

shifting gear from a teacher-dominated classroom to one where the core classroom dynamic was becoming pupil-centric through the sharing of lesson objectives and learning targets. In addition, as experience grew with what worked and what did not, strategic teaching skills developed which I was able to use with increasing proficiency especially in my own areas of the teaching of English as a second language, History and Geography. Not to forget the influence Bloom's Taxonomy of Educational Objectives had on my professional mindset ... the intellectual skills-basis appealed greatly to me since it provided a naturally structured operational platform, which in turn helped me consciously and deliberately



Today, ad-hoc, knee-jerk responses to improvement have given way to systematic development strategies which are a gradual, need-and-priority based process that have emerged as a result of regular, consistent and criterion-referenced school evaluation.

plan for effective learning while conducting day-to-day work in my classes.

All of the above stood me in very good stead whenever a peer, a supervisor, the head of school or even an external inspector visited my class at any time with or without invitation or advance notice ! Later, when I moved up the 'food chain' and into the school leadership space, the hands-on classroom experience was invaluable and allowed me to lead my teachers from the front so to speak.

Hence, professional growth took me from being a self-conscious fresher to a self-confident leader over the span of a decade or so. This journey was greatly enriched by the award of a Fellowship to the Faculty of Education, University of Cambridge, UK which helped me validate what had evolved over time in my school as well as absorb fresh knowledge from both, on-going research findings and extensive reading on educational leadership.

As school leader, planned improvement and growth was a cherished responsibility - steady re-engineering of processes led to some remarkable, visible and measurable improvement on a whole-school basis which encouraged us greatly - lesser ones like improving pupils' spelling and problem-solving ability in various subjects or teachers' questioning skills, or biggies like shifting from a mostly traditional teacher-centric approach to much more efficient pupil-centric ways.

Today, ad-hoc, knee-jerk responses to improvement have given way to systematic development strategies which are a gradual, need-and-priority based process that have emerged as a result of regular, consistent and criterion-referenced school evaluation. With the welcome clarity that this professionalism has brought in its wake, many schools and groups of schools must now opt for regular school assessment and evaluation of its people and processes, to be followed by need-based school improvement plans that will govern their professional activity purposefully over a minimum period of three-five years for visible and sustainable result.

And since any school is only as good as its teachers are, some practical and doable practices that were a part of our policy have been shared below with the hope that they will be found useful - these focus firstly on well-known yet simple principles which make classroom dynamics pupil-friendly, and secondly on how to make the outcome of evaluation developmental in orientation rather than merely inspectorial for the sake of rating only.

MAKING LEARNING PUPIL-FRIENDLY

While what follows may not make educational headlines anymore, the need for teachers to internalize them on a routine basis is the reality across our urban and rural areas - not all can or should be attempted simultaneously but constant reference to them will help teachers better ensure that every child is included and brought to his/her full potential as far and as soon as possible.

Hence, teachers will influence learning tremendously if their professional mind-set is governed by the following facts:

1. Only interested pupils who understand the purpose of learning will actually approach the lesson positively and retain the learning permanently.
2. Attitudinally, pupils who have strong personal learning goals will engage with the lesson more successfully.
3. Those who compete with other pupils are often quickly de-motivated and will consequently exhibit low levels of confidence.
4. All learners have multiple intelligences in varying degrees, which help them move towards deeper understanding of knowledge and development of skills.
5. Wholesale consumption and retention of 'pre-digested' knowledge and information is becoming more and more redundant nowadays.
6. The best learning environment is one where stress is low but challenge is high.
7. The main kinds of learning are



combinations of visual, auditory and kinesthetic at the primary and secondary levels.

8. The context is what learners retain longer rather than content for its own sake and, that recall is improved with regular review.
9. Every pupil can be empowered to 'think' well at several intellectual levels and with the full use of both sides of the brain to bring about the greatest learning for the largest number of pupils.
10. The BEM principle is very effective i.e. more is remembered from the beginning and end of lessons rather than from its middle.
11. The average span of concentration is limited to the chronological age in minutes plus two minutes approximately with a ceiling of about 25 minutes for adults.

Awareness and internalization of these critical details of how learning can be maximized and relevant application in the

classroom will help teachers "close the learning gap" as pupils negotiate the twelve-year obstacle course called 'school'! Thus, teachers who strive to make lessons interesting and memorable, where pupils ask rather than answer questions as they interact with the work they have to do, where they understand what/why they are learning and receive attention when they need it will raise standards of achievement on the one hand and quality of school graduates on the other.

MAKING ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION PRODUCTIVE

The *raison d'être* of any school is successful learning for life but that does not happen only because it's wished for or even planned for! Rhetoric and jargon must be replaced by evidence of successful teaching and learning. Hence, given all of the above, how skillful teachers are in regularly promoting the good thinking that underpins good learning amongst all their pupils becomes the decisive point of reference whilst gauging the people and processes in the school. Further, it's imperative that teachers' continuing

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Assessment by superiors primarily pegs into school improvement and is necessary to monitor that the school's teaching fraternity ensure they are in line with the school's vision, growth plans and laid-down policies as well as that they are focused toward their own and the school's developmental targets.

professional development is an outcome of the various kinds of on-going assessment that can be conducted by several stakeholders i.e. by one's self, by peers, by pupils and by superiors. Each avatar of assessment has a place in every teacher's continual growth and each strategy contributes to objective and teacher-friendly assessment that leads directly to improvement in skills sets.

My experience in this regard helped embed a workable strategy with elements taken from all of the following aspects:

Teachers' Own Evaluation of Their Instructional Methodology

A short, user-friendly checklist for self-evaluation complied by teachers themselves will reveal whether they regularly provide the right set of 'specs' for 'good thinking and learning' i.e. whether or not critical aspects like the following happen efficiently:

- Sharing learning objectives and targets at the beginning of each lesson.
- Checking achievement of targets at

the end of each lesson.

- Helping pupils set their individual targets based on them.
- Asking higher order questions.
- Catering to various learning styles e.g. visual, spatial, linguistic etc.
- Stretching or supporting pupils with different ability levels.
- Providing regular, descriptive feedback.

Evaluation by Peers

This strategy will ensure that teachers' understanding of their subject matter deepens and grasp of how to teach it widens. Hence, lessons observed by peers twice each year [especially by those with more experience in teaching the same subjects as well as freshers with new ideas and/or knowledge] will not only reveal any gap in content mastery and its delivery, but will also help provide tried and tested help or remedial steps on the one hand and new initiatives on the other for fast-track, sure-fire improvement.

Evaluation by Pupils

Teachers sincerely committed to improvement as well as learning-centricity, will always use this 'quick-fix' to possible inadequacy in classroom dynamics by frequently asking their pupils [who are the chief stakeholders] a couple of straightforward questions at the end of lessons:

- What do you think went well / did not go well today?
- What would you all like to see more of / less of?
- What else can we do to make our time together more interesting?

This is pupil-teacher partnership at its best!

Evaluation by Superiors

This is the traditional type of assessment which serves to dilate every teacher's pupils [read eyes!] and bring on the knocks since it tends to be inspectorial for the most part. However, assessment by superiors primarily pegs into school improvement and is necessary to monitor that the school's teaching fraternity ensure they are in line with the school's vision, growth plans and laid-down policies as well as that they are focused toward their own and the school's developmental targets.

Additionally, how well individual teachers are performing within the context of pupils' performance analyses can also be checked out and individual advice given confidentially where required. Hence, for integral improvement in the classroom via assessment by superiors, evidence will be recorded in areas like the following:

- How well each teacher is doing when measured against the class/school averages generated through pupils' performance analyses.
- How well instructional methodology caters to individual differences.
- How well independent work by pupils is planned and encouraged.
- How age-appropriate the planned learning experiences are.

All of the above will come together in schools committed to planned and on-going improvement. The professionalism inherent in each aspect outlined above will serve to construct more efficient processes and teaching skills, all of which will stand up to external scrutiny without either problem or panic. Teachers will have grown in confidence while their leaders' confidence in them will have sky rocketed too!

And so, when the Union HRD Ministry finally gets its act together hopefully in the near future [ahem!] and confirms that all schools must go through inspection prior to rating and [re]accreditation by authorized external agents, teaching staff will not have to go through the knee-knocking stress I had to contend with decades ago! With globally savvy instructional skills and an effective pupil-centric classroom dynamic that promotes good learning, teachers will withstand the pressure of assessment with professional maturity and dignified composure. In fact, in my view, this external evaluation is the best thing that has been planned for schools in a long while since they are unbiased and wholly objective - validation of all school processes and systems when they are already achieving good teaching and learning cannot be enough of a good thing!

May the teaching fraternity's eyes always remain bright and spirits even brighter for our children deserve nothing but the best from us! ■

With globally savvy instructional skills and an effective pupil-centric classroom dynamic that promotes good learning, teachers will withstand the pressure of assessment with professional maturity and dignified composure.



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LEARNING OUTCOMES

A peek into the the model of evaluation being followed and why it seems to be failing to deliver.

by RM Bhandari



Of late there has been a lot of debate about the tangibility of learning experiences. Was the model of evaluation being followed failing to deliver? I think the answer is yes, because primarily it was based upon assessing the end result or terminal performance and rote memorization.

The learning journey not only covers the absorbed content transacted by the teacher but includes cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains of the persona which are directed and dimensioned over a period of time.

Further, the education system is marks centric rather than application oriented. The continuous and comprehensive evaluation introduced by the government in the year 2009 is a singular progressive step to redefine the assessment system. The whole idea is to

make the assessment exercise more dynamic and in sync with modern evaluating procedures.

Is the Indian education system geared to implement the proposed evaluating method in totality? This is certainly a matter of debate and concern. Obviously, the plurality of social Indian structure will defeat the rider of uniformity in administering, as there is considerable amount of subjectivity involved in assessing the co-scholastic and co-curricular domain. Nonetheless, there are parameters and rubrics detailed and defined.

Learning outcomes are interpreted under various aspects, which are briefly discussed as under.

Comprehensive Evaluation: The summative assessment is the terminal examination and which primarily assesses cognitive ability and

is norm referenced. The pupils achievement are reported and compared. The formative assessment is based on the concept of feedback and calls for regular correction and improvement based upon the inputs. This type of assessment is qualitative and criterion referenced. The domains covered in the formative assessment include learning experiences apart from the transacted content and which may incorporate quizzes, debates, assignments, classroom participation etc.

Absolute and Comparative Scores: The achievement score are absolute marks and indicates the individual's performance. However, if the achievement score is compared with the scores achieved by the group then it is referred to as percentile score. There is no doubt that the percentile system is a reflection of comparative performance of an individual compared to group.

Marks and Grades: The performance in the achievement test or standardized test is reported in terms of numbers, which are termed as marks. However, if the achievement is reported in terms of alphabets corresponding to a range of marks then it is called grades.

The grading system moderates the marks and somehow decreases the gap between the achievement scores.

Achievement and Standardized Test: The assessment exercise administered to the pupils by an internal agency is referred as an achievement test. The structure of the test is informal. Moreover, the examination conducted by the outside agency (Board) with formal setting and guidelines is termed as standardized test. It goes without saying that standardized test has more credibility in assessing the learning experiences of pupils than the achievement test.

The achievement scores in terms of numbers result in a graph with no defined boundaries. The graph corresponding to grades will always be distinctive type.

Proficiency Test: The assessment carried out to indicate the interest and aptitude for a particular learning area is termed as a

proficiency test. The structure of the domain includes the nitry-gritty of the same so as to truly reflect and indicate individual preference.

Different Boards: Different boards with their own set of syllabus and procedures assess the learning outcome. Of course, there is disparity in this process as the commonality can't be adhered to as there are numerous factors guiding the policy of different board.

Social Economic Aspirations: The progress and rapid development has also called for the change in assessing procedures. The online evaluation is one such step to assess the performance and readiness of pupils. It is cost and time effective. The learning is assessed through machine-generated test.

The inflated expectation of parents from their wards regarding unrealistic performance in examination results in limiting the creativity of the child. The mark driven education system deviates the focus of student from true learning and real understanding. Also, it fails to strike an appropriate balance between intended learning and rote memorization and with the consequence the entire approach towards studies becomes goal and result oriented.

The learning outcome in some ways is linked to the career path chosen. If there is mismatch between the opted stream and desired career path then it results in confusion in the beautiful mind of student with an unhappy soul and low self-esteem. At different stages of life the learning outcome has numerous interpretation and implication for an individual. But, certainly learning is a continuous process and we all learn and grow from our mundane experiences.

The learning experience is enriched, enlightened and extended in doing what heart and head directs. It certainly encourages one to excel in and achieve the self-defined trajectory in life and prepare to face challenges. In a knowledgeable society each individual should aspire to reach an altitude according to his attitude and aptitude. ■

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THE PURPOSE OF EDUCATION TODAY

A trajectory of vocationalised, instrumentalist education arises out of an increasing need for trained, skilled labour in the marketplace. In contrast, there is a broadly humanist, liberal vision of education which is deeply suspicious of the marketplace as the inevitable end-product.

Dr Shalini Advani

Amidst the increasing clamour for a discourse on educational improvement, on budgetary allocations and retention rates, there is one crucial question which is insufficiently discussed. And the question is this: What is the purpose of education today?

At various times, over the past 100 years, that question has been answered differently — in colonial India, the official answer would have been, “To create a cadre of clerks and officials to run the colonial state,” while in a newly decolonised India, the official answer could be, “To create a nationalist sensibility and the national citizen.”

Today, I suspect the official answer to the question about the purpose of education would be: “To give people jobs.” Increasingly, the emphasis in education is towards vocationalisation and skills development. In a recent private conversation, the Education Minister of a north Indian State said, “We have a lot of jobs. We just don’t have the people skilled enough to do them. We need bio-technologists, fitters, crane operators, nurses and lab assistants. But our education does not prepare young people for what we need. We need to change that.”

Similarly, we find that the Confederation of Indian Industry is showing increasing interest in school education. The CII recently commissioned a study to look at the challenges and opportunities which face Indian industry, and this is its thesis: That in the year 2025, there will be about 40 million jobs worldwide, which need to be filled. India will be one of the few countries in the world to have a labour surplus of the right age group. It, therefore, believes that we need to think about the kinds of education system necessary to develop skills whereby our children will be best equipped to function in this scenario.

There are, in fact, already a number of powerful initiatives in rural education led by the private sector — an IT company working in 10,000 government primary and high schools, or a mobile network provider which has committed Rs. 200 crore to improve rural primary education. Government initiatives in vocational education plan a doubling of capacity in vocational schools including ITIs, and an increase in the number of Jan



Shiksha Sansthan to re-skill industrial workers.

Public consensus on the way to improve educational access is increasingly moving towards a public-private partnership. But we must be concerned about the terrible narrowness of the vision for educational improvement which characterises our discourse. Education, in this picture, is about the implanting of useful skills — the assumption being that it will ultimately lead to both personal and national enrichment. But as Martha Nussbaum writes, education is not simply a producer of wealth; it is a producer of citizens. Citizens in a democracy need, above all, freedom of mind — to learn to ask searching questions; to reject shoddy historical argument; to imagine alternative possibilities from a globalising, service and market-driven economy; to think what it might be like to be in others’ shoes. Recently, the Israeli novelist, Amos Oz, spoke about the importance of reading novels as what he calls an antidote to hate. He said:

“I believe in literature as a bridge between peoples. I believe curiosity can be a moral quality. I believe imagining the other can be an antidote to fanaticism. Imagining the other will make you not only a better

The skills and thought processes which engender the curiosity, the imagining, are associated with the humanities, the arts and literature, and despite the splendid interventions in the NCERT’s new textbooks for History and Political Science, these areas are terribly neglected.

We must not allow a creative, liberal education to be seen as an unfashionable or dated notion, irrelevant for the aspirations which have already penetrated deep into the world of our rural and urban students. More than ever before, education has become an aspirational ideal – if we cannot demonstrate the relevance of our education so that it can both shape and fulfil these aspirations, the educational landscape will be hijacked by our new economic forces.



businessperson or a better lover but even a better person. Part of the tragedy between Jew and Arab is the inability of so many of us, Jews and Arabs, to imagine each other. Really imagine each other: the loves, the terrible fears, the anger, the passion. There is too much hostility between us, too little curiosity."

The skills and thought processes which engender the curiosity, the imagining, are associated with the humanities, the arts and literature, and despite the splendid interventions in the NCERT's new textbooks for History and Political Science, these areas are terribly neglected. Our dominant conception of worthwhile education is increasingly technical and mechanistic. The thinking processes engendered by the social sciences are today seen as quaint, vaguely lefty-intellectual, a kind of quixotic idealism which has very little to do with the real business of life.

It is a strange irony that in the educational world of Gandhi, Tagore and Aurobindo, there are tragically few voices which assert a more holistic vision. One of the most consistent and eloquent reminders is found in the writing of Krishna Kumar and it is worth looking briefly at his newest book, "A Pedagogue's Romance," to engage with this perspective on education for our national development. The book, like all his writing, engages with the role of education in the creation of a democratic and transformative

space for all people, what he ironically calls a romantic ideal in contrast to the practical, instrumentalist planning which characterises much of our educational decision-making.

It outlines a space which asserts the claims of the rural over the urban, poor over the rich, the regional or Hindi language speaker over the English-speaking elite. It suggests that at its best, education can be transformative but warns that it is more often a process of disempowerment. The essential question he poses is how education planners can successfully combine the systems of educational policy with classroom practice to create reflective, independent learners in every village, every district town.

The book argues that "We need to guard against the wholesale sacrifice of the humanist concept of education for a cold instrumentalist substitute which promises quality control by focusing on outcomes, both pedagogic and social." The idea of "outcomes" in education has gained widespread acceptance across the world. It is a term which emerges from a productive, entrepreneurial economy where everything is a measurable outcome, even the extent and depth of learning. In many education systems around the world, outcomes already shape student assessment, teacher salary structures and measure the effectiveness of the learning programme.

So how do these two opposed notions of education relate to each other? The first — a

trajectory of vocationalised, instrumentalist education arises out of an increasing need for trained, skilled labour in the marketplace and, at its best, plans to fit people for jobs, creating emancipation through the ability to earn. In contrast, there is a broadly humanist, liberal vision of education which is deeply suspicious of the marketplace as the inevitable end-product.

Krishna Kumar's voice is a messianic invocation of a better world. But is it really possible any longer, to halt the drum beat of globalised markets? And do we want to arrest it? I believe that we cannot halt the flood, and therefore the terrain for the education battle must shift to think about the ways in which we can equip learners to productively engage with it, employing communities, historical understanding and a sense of empowerment.

We must not allow a creative, liberal education to be seen as an unfashionable or dated notion, irrelevant for the aspirations which have already penetrated deep into the world of our rural and urban students. More than ever before, education has become an aspirational ideal — if we cannot demonstrate the relevance of our education so that it can both shape and fulfil these aspirations, the educational landscape will be hijacked by our new economic forces.

It has become increasingly important then to find the means to engage in a conversation between different value systems, if only to persuade a sceptical world that there is more than one route to empowerment. How do we find ways of bridging the traditional bifurcations between the world of the mind and the body? Between skill, which is essentially repetitive and imitative, and art, which is original and creative? Between manual labour and intellectual labour?

It is crucial for our framework of education to move more assertively to define this bridge and we need to identify the learning approaches which will incorporate this for all students. Let me venture two examples: the first is how we define creativity. If we look at the creative process, it is clear that it is not only about aesthetics or intuition or inspiration. It is also about working on, testing and refining an idea to shape it into a desirable end result. To do so requires skill in

analysis and evaluation. The problem-tackling aspect of creativity means that we can encourage learners to work in groups to find creative solutions to problems, develop the skills of teamwork, and simultaneously promote reflection and independent thinking.

The second example relates to the ways in which electronic technology is used in schools and how it can be used by students to solve problems, exchange information, develop ideas and create models. An example that immediately comes to mind is the exercise where a group of street children used digital cameras to record their daily experience, creating an exhibition which became an essay in self-reflection.

Eventually, the future of education in India is not a question of access or literacy or teacher training — at whatever pace, these features will grow, simply to respond to a market demand. The issue is really about the soul of education and what we are doing to safeguard that. ■

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and heading schools, includes creating effective learning environments, school management systems, staffing and curriculum development. Dr Advani was a member of the National Council for Educational Research and Training (NCERT) Steering Committee for the revised English Curriculum; the review committee for the National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE) proposed Diploma in Elementary Education course and on the editorial group for the NCERT English textbooks. Her publications include *Growing Up in the Nuclear Shadow*, (Orient Longman) a reader for young people on nuclearisation and peace, *Educating the National Imagination* (OUP) a study of nationalism in English language textbooks; and as special editor of an issue of *Contemporary Education Dialogue*, on the National Curriculum Framework 2005.

If we look at the creative process, it is clear that it is not only about aesthetics or intuition or inspiration. It is also about working on, testing and refining an idea to shape it into a desirable end result. To do so requires skill in analysis and evaluation.

COMPREHENSIVE SEXUAL EDUCATION

Adolescents in India today are standing at a confusing crossroad when it comes to sexuality where they are caught between the values and norms of the earlier generation and society today. In such a scenario, the school must step in.

by Preeti Parekh and Gauri Kulkarni

Sexuality Education has always been a passionately debated topic in India for the past decade. While the opponents believe that it only serves to "corrupt" minds and opens a Pandora's Box, supporters believe that children have a right to know about their own bodies.

This in turn would help them make safer, responsible decisions. This was amply illustrated when the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE), introduced the Adolescent Education Program since 2005. This programme aims to provide accurate, objective, scientific knowledge about health, reproductive health, gender, substance abuse and values (CBSE, 2005). Unfortunately, it was suspended in many states due to objections raised by teachers, parents and policy makers. These objections raised questions about the content and the need for such a programme. AEP now has been introduced in schools affiliated to the CBSE, whereas some states like Maharashtra have suspended this programme from the state run schools (www.knowyourbodyknowyourrights.com/fundamentals/adolescence-education-program/).

The National Curriculum Framework 2005 recognizes that age-appropriate context-specific interventions focused on adolescent reproductive and sexual health concerns, including HIV/AIDS and drug/ substance

abuse are needed to provide children opportunities to construct knowledge and acquire life skills, so that they cope with concerns related to the process of growing up" (NCERT, 2005).

Somewhere in this debate though, we are losing sight of the fact that sex is not just a biological fact nor is just an act. This "act" is deeply intertwined with gender, power equations, cultural and social norms and most importantly, emotions. Hence, when we talk about sex education, we need to talk about education that educates youngsters about sexuality.

Adolescents in India today are standing at a confusing crossroad when it comes to sexuality where they are caught between the values and norms of the earlier generation and society today. Their parents' generation is still caught in the silence that surrounds this subject.

Display of affection, acknowledgement of love or simply talking about it is something that is to be kept within the confines of one's bedroom. Acceptance of the possibility of different sexual preferences is rare. As against this, media - T.V. serials, ads, movies are bombarding the youngsters with images and role models that glorify and romanticize the whole experience of being in love and having sex. These also put forth an image of what a man/woman should be like. The very grey patch in between of what actually transpires while in a relationship is conveniently left

unsaid. There are few forums which lay the cards on the table, talk about real life and the everyday nuances of relationships and choices.

Teenagers often resort to surfing websites and searching for information furtively, keeping their relationships and feelings under cover.

A recent survey conducted by UTV motion pictures among the age group of 12-19 years across major Indian cities, demonstrates that the world of teenagers is a very different one from what we would like to think it is. It was found that as many as 30% of the teenagers were not comfortable talking to their parents about the problems they faced; every second teen has already kissed someone of the opposite sex; 15% of boys and girls acknowledged getting intimate with somebody; 2 out of every 3 boys admitted to having watched a porn film by the time they were 16 years old; 1 out of every 4 girls admitted to having watched a porn film by the time they were 16 years old; One out of every 5 teens (both boys and girls) claimed to have had sex; 9 out of 10 boys and 7 out of 10 girls are ok with premarital sex; and 45% of teenage girls felt that if they got pregnant, they would go for an abortion without ever letting their parents know.

This leaves us with young adults equipped with information, an impulsiveness to indulge in what is forbidden combined with the absence of adequate wisdom to control these impulses and having no space to discuss, debate and arrive at healthy decisions. If we want our future generation to make responsible choices, treat one another with respect, have healthy relationships, we need to begin talking about sexuality in all its aspects be it sexual orientation, gender roles, choices or social-cultural norms.

A Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE) Program for Class IX (Age group 13-15 yrs) at The Orchid School (Pune) was envisioned with these guiding principles in mind.

THE LIFE SKILLS ORIENTATION PROGRAMME

The CSE is a part of the Life skills Orientation (LSO) Program at The Orchid School. From Class V onwards, in the LSO class, children have been discussing topics like peer pressure, self awareness, addiction and so on. Hence learning about sexuality is yet another life skill that is added to their basket.

THE PROCESS

The guiding concern for this program was that it should be relevant and connected with the real world. This module is not a prescriptive model of "what should be", but rather looking at and understanding choices, diversities and consequences.

Preparing the module entailed a usage of the outline recommended by the CBSE board, re-vamping and modifying it to ensure its relevance and integrating aspects of modules used in other countries. The concept of sexuality in totality—beginning from gauging students' previous knowledge, to a social-moral-cultural context, introduction and usage of clinical terminology, gender, sexual orientation and choices was to be part of it.

GETTING THE ADULTS READY

The 2007 annual report of TARSHI (an NGO with a helpline offering information, counselling and referrals on sexuality) states- "...of the 5416 calls by 15-19 year olds that were analyzed, 3088 were to do with General Sexuality Information related queries." They also found that the maximum numbers of calls come from people in the age group of 15-29 years (TARSHI, 2007)

More convinced people equates to more adults for the students to turn to, more spaces for a positive attitude to get dispersed and more opportunities for adults too to get comfortable with this subject. A big part of the taboo on discussing sexuality frankly and openly is that many adults cannot easily

communicate their thoughts about sex, since they have imbibed emotional attitudes from their childhood that are difficult to change.

An intensive session with teachers was conducted to take them on board in terms of the objectives, attitudes and the need for CSE.

For the parents, a session was organized by the children themselves. They spoke about their understanding, the need for CSE and their expectations from the adults. This presentation was followed by a movie chosen specifically for the fact that it raised questions about justice, respect and how we as a society treat people who are different in any way from us. It was envisioned that the movie can open the possibilities of discussions about safe sex, homosexuality, AIDS, changing social-cultural norms and attitudes at home.

BEGINNING WITH THE STUDENTS

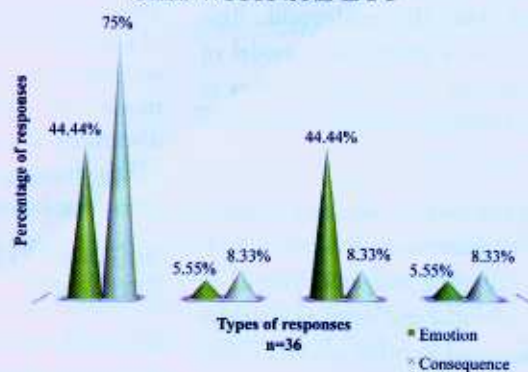
Life skills sessions are predominantly interactive in nature. Students see it as a space where they can be free to sound out their beliefs and where they can trust that no judgments would be made. There is a continuous exchange of view points, beliefs, values and assumptions. The challenge for the facilitator is to cautiously tread through, continuously channelizing, sorting, weaving and subtly placing forth different perspectives. Hence at no point can the facilitator sit back and predict the outcome, it is a continuously evolving process. Responses define the next step within the general outline.

Within class spaces, we found that students often give idealistic, politically right opinions that are an amalgamation of information gathered from their environment. Study visits were incorporated within the module with the intention of placing learners in the actual situation where they can experience it as a reality, let it affect them, make sense of it in their own way so that they may think about it and in due course form their opinions.

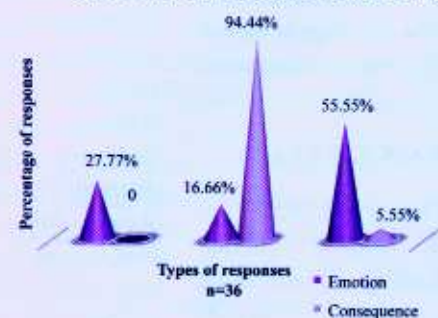
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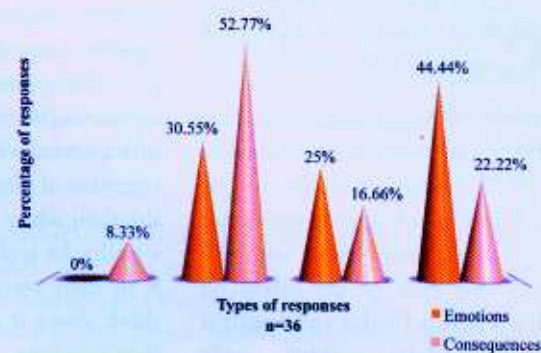
SEX WITH SAFETY



GIVING IN TO HAVING SEX



WAIT UNTIL MARRIAGE



The programme progresses from examining choices, emotional and practical consequences of those choices, giving accurate information about questions related to sex and sexuality, engaging in myth busting sessions to then more complex discussions about gender, gender roles, sexual orientation and choices.

STUDENT RESPONSES

It has been an interesting journey with the students so far. In the initial sessions, their responses mirrored the sentiments of the society at large. Equipped with information and misinformation, bombarded with potent stereotypes, the students had strong opinions, often focusing upon right and wrong. In one of the first sessions, the students were asked to respond to the situation given below. The groups were formed differently so as to see if there is any trend in their responses.

Situation: Your neighbors have just moved in. The elder daughter is pregnant and it seems that she is not yet married.

Responses:

BOYS GROUP	GIRLS GROUP	MIXED GROUP
"It is the guy's fault"	"No one is at fault"	"Let the baby be left outside an adoption centre"
"She should marry the guy"	"May be the fault of parents or the girl herself"	"You should not abort after 1 month"
"Parents may tell us to keep away-may be a bad influence"	"She should marry the boy"	"She should not marry the boyfriend-because if he really cared for her, he would have married her/proposed to her already."
"She should abort the child"	"She should not give away the child"	"There would be a lot of talking about her"
"If she cannot afford to abort, then she should commit suicide"	"Parents may have been very liberal"	"It could have been consensual sex or molestation"
"Both are at fault, she should marry the guy or someone else"		"We don't know whose fault it is"

In the session that followed, we explored various choices available in regards to intimate relationships, the emotions and consequences associated with them, through a worksheet. The anonymity of their responses and the trust and comfort that they

could give their opinion without being judged, helped them open up.

There were four scenarios that the students needed to analyze in terms of the emotions experienced and the consequences of the choice. The four choices when one enters an intimate relationship were – Say a clear no to the partner (for sex), have safe sex, give into having (unsafe) sex and wait until marriage to have sex.

The responses this time were a direct reflection of their world and not their parents' world. Often, while children could recognize and acknowledge the experience of positive feelings like excitement, pleasure etc associated with a choice like having unsafe sex, they could also predict that despite these emotions, the consequences can be disastrous.

CHOICE 1

Clear no to partner

The option of saying a "clear no to partner" (for having a sexual relationship without marriage) was one mostly associated with negative emotions (sadness, anger, fear, anxiety) and consequences (Partner will be extremely angry, break up, others would tease/underestimate me etc). 58.33% of the students associated negative emotions with this decision. As against this, when consequences come into play, this time, 80.55% of the students predicted that saying no to your partner will result in a negative consequence. Only 11% associated positive emotions with this decision, and only 5.55% associated positive consequences with it. 13.88% students predicted mixed consequences (e.g. Partner may break up but you know you are safe etc).

CHOICE 2

Have safe sex

The students' responses appear to reflect their ambivalence. The percentage that had positive and mixed emotional responses was identical i.e- 44.44%. However, as many as 75% of children

predicted positive consequences emerging from this decision. These positive consequences were mostly about prevention of pregnancy. Also somewhere their words indicated sex as a positive aspect of a relationship when it involves safe behaviour.

CHOICE 3

Give into having (unsafe) sex

It was reassuring to see that none of the students saw any beneficial consequences from engaging in unsafe sex. 27.7% of the students associated positive emotions with this choice. The responses seem to be a mix of societal attitudes as well as information regarding the problems that will arise with unprotected sex in terms of unwanted pregnancies and infections.

CHOICE 4

Wait until marriage to have sex

When it comes to waiting until marriage, 30.55% of the students associated positive emotions with it; while as many as 44.44% had mixed emotions about it. 25% were ambivalent, where many of them reported feelings of security and safety; they also associated the choice as being boring and being ridiculed by others. When it came to consequences however, as many as 52.77% foresaw the choice leading to positive consequences and 22.22% were unsure-they thought there would be positive consequences (safety, no fear of pre-marital pregnancy etc), but they also were concerned about negative reactions from peers.

WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

Students, like us adults, are driven and guided by strong societal forces and compulsions. They are at a threshold where they are forming their opinions, gauging expectations and reactions and are scared to voice themselves. When they are encouraged and allowed to explore their understanding of sexuality, they are more open to newer perspectives and viewing situations in a healthier manner. Accepting the curiosity, providing the whole picture with its complexities,

supporting it with spaces to clear out and question beliefs will help them unravel what they see as their truth. Well informed young adults will immediately transfer to safer and well thought sexual behaviour.

Our challenge as adults is to realize that it is time for us to overcome our discomfort, intrude and dispel this silence. Then only would we be able to foster in our next generation a sense of respect for themselves and others especially when it comes to relationships and sexual choices. ■



PREETI PAREKH holds a masters degree in Psychiatric social work. She is intrigued by the mysteries and resilience of the human mind. She is fascinated by the fact

that children are truly aware of their needs and their fulfillment. She utilizes her role as a counsellor and life skills educator to re-instate this with the adult community.



GAURI KULKARNI holds a post graduate diploma in Psychology. She feels honored that she has the possibility of being part of peoples stories as a counsellor and life skills

educator. She marvels at how adolescents empower themselves to take charge of their own lives.



THE CHILD-DRIVEN EDUCATION

Sugata Mitra's "Hole in the Wall" experiments have shown that, in the absence of supervision or formal teaching, children can teach themselves and each other, if they're motivated by curiosity and peer interest.

Article courtesy TED

Well, that's kind of an obvious statement up there, I started with that sentence about 12 years ago, and I started in the context of developing countries, but you're sitting here from every corner of the world. So if you think of a map of your country, I think you'll realize that for every country on Earth, you could draw little circles to say, "These are places where good teachers won't go." On top of that, those are the places from where trouble comes. So we have an ironic problem. Good teachers don't want to go to just those places where they're needed the most.

I started in 1999 to try and address this problem with an experiment, which was a very simple experiment in New Delhi. I basically embedded a computer into a wall of a slum in New Delhi. The children barely went to school. They didn't know any English. They'd never seen a computer before, and they didn't know what the internet was. I connected high speed internet to it – it's about three feet off the ground – turned it on and left it there. After this, we noticed a couple of interesting things, which you'll see. But I repeated this all over India and then through a large part of the world and noticed that children will learn to do what they want to learn to do.

This is the first experiment that we did – eight year-old boy on your right teaching his student, a six year-old girl, and he was teaching her how to browse. This boy here in the middle of central India – this is in a Rajasthan village, where the children recorded their own music and then played it back to each other, and in the process, they've enjoyed themselves thoroughly. They did all of this in four hours, after seeing the computer for the first time. In another south Indian village, these boys here had assembled a video camera and were trying to take the photograph of a bumble bee. They downloaded it from Disney.com, or one of these websites, 14 days after putting the computer in their village. So at the end of it, we concluded that groups of children can learn to use computers and the internet on their own, irrespective of who or where they were.

At that point, I became a little more ambitious and decided to see what else could children do with a computer. We started off with an experiment in Hyderabad, India, where I gave a group of children – they spoke English with a very strong Telugu accent. I gave them a computer with a speech-to-text interface, which you now get free with Windows, and asked them to speak



Dr Sugata Mitra at the TED Conference



Children at a Hole in the Wall project

In 1999, Sugata Mitra and his colleagues dug a hole in a wall bordering an urban slum in New Delhi, installed an Internet-connected PC, and left it there (with a hidden camera filming the area). What they saw was kids from the slum playing around with the computer and in the process learning how to use it and how to go online, and then teaching each other.

In the following years they replicated the experiment in other parts of India, urban and rural, with similar results, challenging some of the key assumptions of formal education. The "Hole in the Wall" project demonstrates that, even in the absence of any direct input from a teacher, an environment that stimulates curiosity can cause learning through self-instruction and peer-shared knowledge. Mitra, who's now a professor of educational technology at Newcastle University (UK), calls it "minimally invasive education."

into it. So when they spoke into it, the computer typed out gibberish, so they said, "Well, it doesn't understand anything of what we are saying." So I said, "Yeah, I'll leave it here for two months. Make yourself understood to the computer." So the children said, "How do we do that." And I said, "I don't know, actually." (Laughter) And I left. (Laughter) Two months later – and this is now documented in the Information Technology for International Development journal – that accents had changed and were remarkably close to the neutral British accent in which I had trained the speech-to-text synthesizer. In other words, they were all speaking like James Tooley. (Laughter) So they could do that on their own. After that, I started to experiment with various other things that they might learn to do on their own.

I got an interesting phone call once from Columbo, from the late Arthur C. Clarke, who said, "I want to see what's going on." And he couldn't travel, so I went over there. He said two interesting things, "A teacher that can be replaced by a machine should be." (Laughter) The second thing he said was that, "If children have interest, then education happens." And I was doing that in the field, so every time I would watch it and think of him.

(Video) Arthur C. Clarke: And they can definitely help people, because children quickly learn to navigate and go in and find things which interest them. And when you've got interest, then you have education.

Sugata Mitra: I took the experiment to South Africa. This is a 15 year-old boy.

(Video) Boy: ... just mention, I play games like animals, and I listen to music.

SM: And I asked him, "Do you send emails?" And he said, "Yes, and they hop across the ocean." This is in Cambodia, rural Cambodia – a fairly silly arithmetic game, which no child

would play inside the classroom or at home. They would, you know, throw it back at you. They'd say, "This is very boring." If you leave it on the pavement, and if all the adults go away, then they will show off with each other about what they can do. This is what these children are doing. They are trying to multiply, I think. And all over India, at the end of about two years, children were beginning to Google their homework. As a result, the teachers reported tremendous improvements in their English – (Laughter) rapid improvement and all sorts of things. They said, "They have become really deep thinkers and so on and so forth. (Laughter) And indeed they had. I mean, if there's stuff on Google, why would you need to stuff it into your head? So at the end of the next four years, I decided that groups of children can navigate the internet to achieve educational objectives on their own.

At that time, a large amount of money had come into Newcastle University to improve schooling in India. So Newcastle gave me a call. I said, "I'll do it from Delhi." They said, "There's no way you're going to handle a million pounds-worth of University money sitting in Delhi." So in 2006, I bought myself a heavy overcoat and moved to Newcastle. I wanted to test the limits of the system. The first experiment I did out of Newcastle was actually done in India. And I set myself an impossible target: can Tamil speaking 12 year-old children in a south Indian village teach themselves biotechnology in English on their own? And I thought, I'll test them. They'll get a zero. I'll give the materials. I'll come back and test them. They get another zero. I'll go back and say, "Yes, we need teachers for certain things."

I called in 26 children. They all came in there, and I told them that there's some really difficult stuff on this computer. I wouldn't be surprised if you didn't understand anything.

"I think we've just stumbled across a self-organizing system. A self-organizing system is one where a structure appears without explicit intervention from the outside. Self-organizing systems also always show emergence, which is that the system starts to do things, which it was never designed for. Which is why you react the way you do, because it looks impossible. I think I can make a guess now. Education is self-organizing system, where learning is an emergent phenomenon."



Dr. Mitra with students during the Galeshead Experiments in 2009

It's all in English, and I'm going. (Laughter) So I left them with it. I came back after two months, and the 26 children marched in looking very, very quiet. I said, "Well, did you look at any of the stuff?" They said, "Yes, we did." "Did you understand anything?" "No, nothing." So I said, "Well, how long did you practice on it before you decided you understood nothing?" They said, "We look at it every day." So I said, "For two months, you were looking at stuff you didn't understand?" So a 12 year-old girl raises her hand and says, literally, "Apart from the fact that improper replication of the DNA molecule causes genetic disease, we've understood nothing else."

(Laughter)

(Applause)

(Laughter)

It took me three years to publish that. It's just been published in the British Journal of Educational Technology. One of the referees who refereed the paper said, "It's too good to be true," which was not very nice. Well, one of the girls had taught herself to become the teacher. And then that's her over there. Remember, they don't study English. I edited out the last bit when I asked, "Where is the neuron?" and she says, "The neuron? The neuron?" And then she looked and did this. Whatever the expression, it was not very nice.

So their scores had gone up from zero to 30 percent, which is an educational impossibility under the circumstances. But 30 percent is not a pass. So I found that they had a friend, a local accountant, a young girl, and they played football with her. I asked that girl, "Would you teach them enough biotechnology to pass?" And she said, "How would I do that? I don't know the subject." I said, "No, use the method of the grandmother." She said, "What's that?" I said,



A Self Organised Learning Environment (SOLE)

"Well, what you've got to do is stand behind them and admire them all the time. Just say to them, 'That's cool. That's fantastic. What is that? Can you do that again? Can you show me some more?'" She did that for two months. The scores went up to 50, which is what the posh schools of New Delhi, with a trained biotechnology teacher, were getting.

So I came back to Newcastle with these results and decided that there was something happening here that definitely was getting very serious. So, having experimented in all sorts of remote places, I came to the most remote place that I could think of. (Laughter) Approximately 5,000 miles from Delhi is the little town of Galeshead. In Galeshead, I took 32 children, and I started to fine-tune the method. I made them into groups of four. I said, "You make your own groups of four. Each group of four can use one computer and not four computers." Remember, from the Hole in the Wall. "You can exchange groups. You can walk across to another group, if you don't like your group, etc. You can go to another group, peer over their shoulders, see what they're doing, come back to your own group and claim it as your own work." And I explained to them that, you know, a lot of scientific research is done using that method.

(Laughter)

(Applause)

The children enthusiastically got after me and said, "Now, what do you want us to do?" I gave them six GCSE questions. The first group, the best one, solved everything in 20 minutes. The worst, in 45. They used everything that they knew -- news groups, Google, Wikipedia, Ask Jeeves, etc. The teachers said, "Is this deep learning?" I said, "Well, let's try it. I'll come back after two months. We'll give them a paper test -- no

computers, no talking to each other, etc." The average score when I'd done it with the computers and the groups was 76 percent. When I did the experiment, when I did the test, after two months, the score was 76 percent. There was photographic recall inside the children, I suspect because they're discussing with each other. A single child in front of a single computer will not do that. I have further results, which are almost unbelievable, of scores which go up with time. Because their teachers say that after the session is over, the children continue to Google further.

Here in Britain, I put out a call for British grandmothers, after my Kuppam experiment. Well, you know, they're very vigorous people, British grandmothers. 200 of them volunteered immediately. (Laughter) The deal was that they would give me one hour of broadband time, sitting in their homes, one day in a week. So they did that. And over the last two years, over 600 hours of instruction has happened over Skype, using what my students call the granny cloud. The granny cloud sits over there. I can beam them to whichever school I want to.

(Video) Teacher: You can't catch me. You say it. You can't catch me.

Children: You can't catch me.

Teacher: I'm the gingerbread man.

Children: I'm the gingerbread man.

Teacher: Well done. Very good ...

SM: Back at Gateshead, a 10 year-old girl gets into the heart of Hinduism in 15 minutes. You know, stuff which I don't know anything about. Two children watch a TEDTalk. They wanted to be footballers before. After watching 8 TEDTalks, he wants to become Leonardo da Vinci.

(Laughter)

(Applause)

It's pretty simple stuff.

This is what I'm building now. They're called SOLEs: Self Organized Learning Environments. The furniture is designed so that children can sit in front of big, powerful screens, big broadband connections, but in groups. If they want, they can call the granny

cloud. This is a SOLE in Newcastle. The mediator is from Pune, India.

So how far can we go? One last little bit and I'll stop. I went to Turin in May. I sent all the teachers away from my group of 10 year-old students. I speak only English, they speak only Italian, so we had no way to communicate. I started writing English questions on the blackboard. The children looked at it and said, "What?" I said, "Well, do it." They typed it into Google, translated it into Italian, went back into Italian Google. 15 minutes later ... Next question: where is Calcutta? This one, they took only 10 minutes. I tried a really hard one then. Who was Pythagoras, and what did he do? There was silence for a while, then they said, "You've spelled it wrong. It's Pitagora." And then, in 20 minutes, the right-angled triangles began to appear on the screens. This sent shivers up my spine. These are 10 year-olds. Text: In another 30 minutes they would reach the Theory of Relativity. And then?

(Laughter)

(Applause)

SM: So you know what's happened? I think we've just stumbled across a self-organizing system. A self-organizing system is one where a structure appears without explicit intervention from the outside. Self-organizing systems also always show emergence, which is that the system starts to do things, which it was never designed for. Which is why you react the way you do, because it looks impossible. I think I can make a guess now. Education is self-organizing system, where learning is an emergent phenomenon. It'll take a few years to prove it, experimentally, but I'm going to try. But in the meanwhile, there is a method available. One billion children, we need 100 million mediators -- there are many more than that on the planet -- 10 millions SOLEs, 180 billion dollars and 10 years. We could change everything. ■



Dr Sugata Mitra was born in Calcutta on 12 February, 1952. He is currently based in Newcastle upon Tyne, UK where he is the Professor of Educational Technology at the School of Education, Communication and Language Sciences.

He has published over 35 research papers and over 1000 articles for adults and children in magazines and newspapers since 1965. Designed and implemented over 12 digital interactive multimedia applications. Played the lead instructional role in a 30 part television serial on computers. Appeared in numerous technical interviews and instructional programs on Indian national and international television. Taught over 1500 students ranging from children to graduates and executives since 1975. Developed courses that have been used to train over a million students all over the world.

TED Ideas worth spreading

The video of this article is available on www.ted.com

WHAT A 4 YEAR OLD SHOULD KNOW

Much less than we realize, and much more...

by Alicia Bayer



I was on a parenting bulletin board recently and read a post by a mother who was worried that her 4½ year old did not know enough. "What should a 4 year old know?" she asked.

Most of the answers left me not only saddened but pretty soundly annoyed. One mom posted a laundry list of all of the things her son knew. Counting to 100, planets, how to write his first and last name, and on and on. Others chimed in with how much more their children already knew, some who were only 3. A few posted URL's to lists of what each age should know. The fewest yet said that each child develops at his own pace and not to worry.

It bothered me greatly to see these mothers responding to a worried mom by adding to her concern, with lists of all the things their children could do that hers couldn't. We are such a competitive culture that even our preschoolers have become trophies and bragging rights. Childhood shouldn't be a race.

So here, I offer my list of what a 4 year old should know.

She should know that she is loved wholly and unconditionally, all of the time.

He should know that he is safe and he should know how to keep himself safe in public, with others, and in varied situations. He should know that he can trust his instincts about people and that he never has to do something that doesn't feel right, no matter who is asking. He should know his personal rights and that his family will back them up.

She should know how to laugh, act silly, be goofy and use her imagination. She should know that it is always okay to paint the sky orange and give cats 6 legs.

He should know his own interests and be encouraged to follow them. If he could care less about learning his numbers, his parents should realize he'll learn them accidentally soon enough and let him immerse himself

instead in rocket ships, drawing, dinosaurs or playing in the mud.

She should know that the world is magical and that so is she. She should know that she's wonderful, brilliant, creative, compassionate and marvelous. She should know that it's just as worthy to spend the day outside making daisy chains, mud pies and fairy houses as it is to practice phonics. Scratch that-- way more worthy.

But more important, here's what parents need to know.

That every child learns to walk, talk, read and do algebra at his own pace and that it will have no bearing on how well he walks, talks, reads or does algebra.

That the single biggest predictor of high academic achievement and high ACT scores is reading to children. Not flash cards, not workbooks, not fancy preschools, not blinking toys or computers, but mom or dad taking the time every day or night (or both!) to sit and read them wonderful books.

That being the smartest or most accomplished kid in class has never had any bearing on being the happiest. We are so caught up in trying to give our children "advantages" that we're giving them lives as multi-tasked and stressful as ours. One of the biggest advantages we can give our children is a simple, carefree childhood.

That our children deserve to be surrounded by books, nature, art supplies and the freedom to explore them. Most of us could get rid of 90% of our children's toys and they wouldn't be missed, but some things are important-- building toys like legos and blocks, creative toys like all types of art materials (good stuff), musical instruments (real ones and multicultural ones), dress up clothes and books, books, books. (Incidentally, much of this can be picked up quite cheaply at thrift shops.) They need to have the freedom to explore with these things too-- to play with scoops of dried beans in the high chair (supervised, of course), to knead bread and make messes, to use paint and play dough and glitter at the kitchen table while we make supper even though it gets everywhere, to

Our children deserve to be surrounded by books, nature, art supplies and the freedom to explore them. Most of us could get rid of 90% of our children's toys and they wouldn't be missed...

have a spot in the yard where it's absolutely fine to dig up all the grass and make a mud pit.

That our children need more of us. We have become so good at saying that we need to take care of ourselves that some of us have used it as an excuse to have the rest of the world take care of our kids. Yes, we all need undisturbed baths, time with friends, sanity breaks and an occasional life outside of parenthood. But we live in a time when parenting magazines recommend trying to commit to 10 minutes a day with each child and scheduling one Saturday a month as family day. That's not okay! Our children don't need Nintendos, computers, after school activities, ballet lessons, play groups and soccer practice nearly as much as they need US.

They need fathers who sit and listen to their days, mothers who join in and make crafts with them, parents who take the time to read them stories and act like idiots with them. They need us to take walks with them and not mind the .1 MPH pace of a toddler on a spring night. They deserve to help us make supper even though it takes twice as long and makes it twice as much work. They deserve to know that they're a priority for us and that we truly love to be with them.

And now back to those 4 year old skills lists.....

I know it's human nature to want to know how our children compare to others and to want to make sure we're doing all we can for them. Here is a list of

what children are typically taught or should know by the end of each year of school, starting with preschool:

<http://www.worldbook.com/typical-course-of-study-preschool-curriculum-guide.html>

Since we homeschool, I occasionally print out the lists and check to see if there's anything glaringly absent in what my kids know. So far there hasn't been, but I get ideas sometimes for subjects to think up games about or books to check out from the library. Whether you homeschool or not, the lists can be useful to see what kids typically learn each year and can be reassuring that they really are doing fine.

If there are areas where it seems your child is lacking, realize that it's not an indication of failure for either you or your child. You just haven't happened to cover that. Kids will learn whatever they're exposed to, and the idea that they all need to know these 15 things at this precise age is rather silly. Still, if you want him to have those subjects covered then just work it into life and play with the subject and he'll naturally pick it up. Count to 60 when you're mixing a cake and he'll pick up his numbers. Get fun books from the library about space or the alphabet. Experiment with everything from backyard snow to celery stalks in food coloring. It'll all happen naturally, with much more fun and much less pressure.

My favorite advice about preschoolers is on this site though:

<http://www.redshift.com/~bonajo/early.htm>

What does a 4 year old need? Much less than we realize, and much more. ■



ALICIA BAYER is a mother of four (soon to be five) children in Minnesota. She's maintained the website "A Magical Childhood" (magicalchildhood.wordpress.com) for nearly 10 years and her

writing has been featured in numerous newsletters, magazines, books and on television in the US. She most loves playing with her children.

Why Books Matter

A 'small' visit to a village library in Uttarakhand turned into a longer commitment towards luring local children toward books and exploring ways to get them more involved in the library

by Yamini Vijayan



8664 As a child, I've chanted that number so many times that the sound of it remains strangely familiar. I'm no good with remembering numbers. I've forgotten my ATM pin at least five times in the past few years. But this number seems to have seeped deep into my otherwise forgetful brain. Perhaps, because it is associated with enchanting memories of dusty bookshelves and musty pages. 8664 was my membership number at a local library in Kerala. Hopefully, it still is.

As children, my sister and I were encouraged to go to the local libraries. We'd walk in between those tall wooden shelves, dizzy with excitement, our eyes wandering curiously over a dozen titles covered in plastic sheets. In fact, we're still as excitable when it comes to books. But I suppose I've always taken books for granted.

A few months ago, I visited a lovely little library that is about fifteen minutes away from where I now stay in Uttarakhand. Started a year ago by Arundati and Aravind –

a couple based in Delhi – the library is in a village called Chatola. The library, a room in their home in the hills, is open on all days between 4 pm and 6 pm which is when most children from Chatola and the villages nearby return home after school. The library is nothing fancy, just a smallish room with a few blue shelves filled with books and a bed in between where you can sit, browse and read. Outside the library, are a few stone benches with a spectacular view of the blue hills and if you are lucky, maybe even the snow-covered Himalayas. To become a member at the library you need to pay nothing at all.

The culture of reading isn't big in these parts of Uttarakhand. The reasons for this could be plenty and I can't say I know them all. But one of the reasons, predictably, is the lack of access to books. Which is what makes a library like the one in Chatola all the more relevant.

In the school where I teach, we have a relatively small collection of well chosen children's books and magazines. A few kids from our school go to the Chatola library as

well. But we continue to grapple with the issue of luring the children towards books without being forceful. Slowly, we are exploring ways to get the children more involved with our own library and the other libraries in the village. Since I teach English in a hindi-medium school, I'm constantly thinking of ways to make learning English more fun and less of a struggle. And so it becomes essential to get them acquainted with books in English.

I once tried reading one of Dr Seuss's nonsense rhymes in class. The kids erupted into giggles and tried to repeat after me. "My name is Ish. On my hand is a dish..." After that, I tried more of his books. It's a guaranteed hit with the kids, every time. It was such a thrill to see them enjoy the sounds of the words. I now see even the more reluctant readers peering into the bookshelves to find books by Dr Seuss. Storytelling is an incredibly fun way to bring kids closer to books. This could mean reading along with children, reading aloud to them, reading animatedly, telling stories through songs or even going through picture books with them. Using puppets to tell stories are also known to work well. The possibilities are endless.

A few days ago, I decided to read aloud a book called 'Chickens Aren't The Only Ones' in class. It's a book about animals and birds that lay eggs. The kids were very taken in by the artwork. "Wow," some of them were quick to exclaim. "Baap re, itna sundar hai na," some others whispered to their friends. As I read, they sat rapt with attention, their widened eyes glued to the pages. I must tell you that this doesn't happen often, them keeping so still. The book also talks about reptiles and mammals and amphibians and all kinds of other creatures. In the context of reptiles and eggs, a boy asked me, "Didi, where do snakes lay eggs from?" I had no clue. And nor had I ever thought of this. I told him that I wasn't so certain and promised to get back to him after looking it up. Schools in India rarely tap into the gigantic potential of story books to shape the thoughts, imagination and language abilities of children.

School libraries could actually be vibrant spaces. I've never understood why we give so much importance to silence in school



libraries. Wouldn't it be nicer if children could interact freely around books without succumbing completely to the 'silence is sacred' notion?

In a government school I visit twice a week, they have a bunch of lovely books. But it's locked up inside a cupboard. Although I had gone there with the idea of teaching English, especially since my Hindi isn't particularly good, I've slowly taken to reading out Hindi stories in class. Sometimes I don't even have to do much reading. The kids look at the artwork and figure out the storyline on their own. I become merely a 'page-turner', while they have a whale of a time interacting around the book. The collection of the books at their school, a 'reading corner' as it is called, was made possible by a couple of outsiders who feel for books.

These reading corners are fantastic ideas actually, simple and easy to implement. Reading corners can be started anywhere, by anybody. You can start a reading corner at a government school or a slum or an office or even somebody's house. But you may require one person who can track the movement of the books, just so that they aren't lost. And books aren't even that expensive anymore. You can get a book from anywhere between Rs 10 to Rs 300. The popular publishers in India are Tulika, Scholastic, Pratham, Eklavya, Amar Chitra Katha, Children's Book Trust, National Book Trust, Tara Books and Ladybird. You can even start a

reading corner with about forty books.

For children whose parents can't afford books, these reading corners will do wonders. The trouble is that even with books becoming more affordable, many Indian parents consider books other than school textbooks to be useless. But like a wise lady once told me, "It's not our textbooks that shaped us and made us who we are today. It is the other books that we read." I couldn't agree more. In fact, if you aren't too sentimental, you can even give away the books that you used as a child.

I suppose the point I'm really trying to make is just that there are a million kids who could do with the company of books right now. If you do want to contribute, it's fairly easy to sow the seeds of learning. The harvest is likely to be fruitful, wouldn't you think? ■



YAMINI VIJAYAN has worked as a features writer with the Sunday Herald, Deccan Herald in Bangalore for two years. She spent the last year in a school in Uttarakhand where she worked with children around language, storytelling and creating engaging reading spaces. She is now looking for interesting things to write about.

RECOMMENDED READING

by Karuna Jaithirtha

JULIE OF THE WOLVES

by Jean Craighead George
For Young Adults (HarperTeen)

Thirteen year old Julie/Miyax (Julie her 'gussak'-white people-name and Miyax amongst her own people.) having run away from her terrifying husband Daniel, and believing her beloved father to be dead, finds herself completely alone in the desolate Alaskan wilderness. This is all we know about her present situation at the opening of the novel. To survive in this harsh drifting tundra she must make friends with the pack of wolves who live near her dwelling. Miyax is unsure how to communicate that she means no harm but is in urgent need of protection and food. Initially Amoroq the noble leader of the pack, steadily ignores her pleas to acknowledge her presence.

Though the other wolves, especially Kapu the pup are curious about her, they are wary of approaching this strange being in their midst. Miyax realizes that to be able to communicate with them, she must speak not in English but in their own language. She watches the pups and Silver, Amoroq's mate, muzzle and prance around him to gain his attention and shelter.

Finally one day Miyax finds herself gazing straight into his imposing eyes. 'The hairs on her neck rose and her eyes widened. Amoroq's ears went forward aggressively and she remembered that wide eyes meant fear to him. It was no good to show him that she was afraid. Animals attacked the fearful. Her heart beat furiously as she grunt-whined the sound of a puppy begging adoringly for attention. Then she got down on her belly and gazed at him with fondness.

The great wolf backed up and avoided her eyes. She had said something wrong perhaps even offended him. Some slight gesture that meant nothing to her had apparently meant something to the wolf. His ears shot forward angrily and it seemed all was lost. She wanted to get up and run but she gathered her courage and pranced closer to him. Swiftly she patted him under the chin. The signal went off. It sped through his body and triggered emotions of love. Amoroq's ears flattened and his tail wagged in friendship... Miyax was one of the pack'.

Meanwhile she also devises plans to reach San Francisco where her pen pal Amy lives. Amy always asks her 'when are you coming to San Francisco'? But as she moves closer and closer to civilization, she comes face to face with its sheer brutality and she is forced to ask herself whether she really does want to go back to living with the rest of her kind. This is one of the most powerful and engrossing stories of survival in the wild. Each page is filled with the striking descriptions of the desolate arctic landscape, the beauty, movement and language of the wolves, their power and restraint. 'The wolves' individual personalities, the powerful Amoroq, wealthy in the Eskimo sense - intelligent, fearless and full of love, the playful cubs, Julie's own watchfulness, resourcefulness and her patience not to overstep boundaries. We also marvel at her natural understanding of all things wild, and her tenderness towards these indomitable creatures that protect her.

There are moments of suspense as well when Julie thinks she has been deserted by the Wolves and the utter desolation that consumes her for the moment. Eventually though, the book explores the theme of killing for need, and killing for pleasure Julie has to choose whether she



wants to be the posh Americanized teenager who mocks these old values or Miyax of the

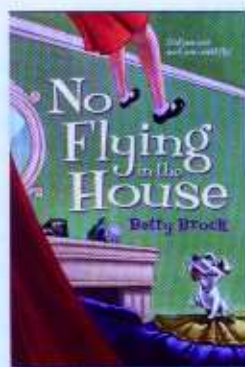
traditional Eskimo culture who respects it.

Jean Craighead George won the Newbery Gold medal for this book. Extensive childhood rambles into the wild fostered her own love of nature. She started writing the book when she was sent on research to Alaska to understand and break through the wolves' communication code. She was also inspired by watching a young girl walking the Alaskan tundra on her own. For those interested there is also a sequel to this book called Julie. A few amongst her other well known books are My Side of the Mountain and its sequel.

NO FLYING IN THE HOUSE

by Betty Brock
For Ages 9-12 (HarperTrophy)

Anabel Tippins seems like an ordinary little girl with good manners and short blond hair. But infact Anabel is rather unusual; instead of parents she has a Guardian in the shape of a tiny white dog called Gloria who wears a gold collar. Together, one day they turn up at the rather stern Mrs Vancourt's house who allows them to stay in her grand house



because Gloria convinces her she can perform three hundred and sixty seven tricks. Anabel knows she is unusual but is not sure why until a rude cat named Belinda, who turns up every now and then at rather odd moments confuses Anabel further about herself. At the very heart of the book it's essentially a story of a child growing up in rather

mysterious circumstances. Betty Brock keeps the style simple and humorous and gently puzzling, all while there is an underlying theme of darkness. This would be a good fantasy book to introduce young readers into the realm who haven't quite started yet.

Betty Brock also conveys the curiosity of child in a charming way, and also delves into a Child's psyche, how its painful it is not be believed, and where simple curiosity is seen as nosiness. She also explores the tender relationship between the dog and little girl. This is a book of loyalty and sacrifice; here is a young girl who dreams of having her own loving parents one day. But also when that wish does finally come true, in she is faced with a terrible choice between power and love of joining her parents or and leaving Gloria behind forever. This has all the elements of a fantasy book without being heavy handed or preachy at all. Girls may be especially drawn to the book as most of the characters are female. A few quirky black and white illustrations by Wallace Tripp brings it alive. This book stands out because particularly, because not being part of a series it doesn't become monotonous or clichéd. Young reader will be drawn to the sparkle of her writing.

THE SUMMER OF THE SWANS

by Betsy Byars

For Ages 12+ (Puffin Modern Classics)

What ails Sara Godfrey? Her nose is too crooked and feet are too big, not only that, her big orange sneakers make her look like Donald duck, and looks are absolutely important no matter what anybody says (believe it or not she even got a grade D in class for writing an essay on looks being the most important).

On top of all this her discontent is fuelled by her beautiful older sister, the coarseness of her aunt Willie who has

raised them since their mother died; the disinterest Of her father who works in another state; and she guiltily admits to herself how she rebels against the restrictions of caring for her 10-year-old, brain-damaged brother, Charlie. Though he is sometimes a nuisance, Sara cares about him. She can never forgive anyone hurting or making sport of Charlie, and when she suspects a boy in her neighborhood has of doing this she cannot get enough revenge on him. But then comes the day when everyone gets up in the morning and Charlie isn't there. He has wandered away in the night, preoccupied with looking at the swans his sister showed him yesterday. He gets lost in the woods, confused, scared, and helpless. Suddenly nothing matters more to Sara than finding him—even her grudge against Joe Melby.

In one simple, brief incident in the life of a fourteen-year-old girl, Betsy Byars creates both a small-town neighborhood that seems real, and a whole world of complex emotions swirling through her protagonist's veins. Not only that, but the misadventure of little Charlie is apt to leave you breathless with fear and concern. Finding him really does make a lot of difference, not only for him but for his confused and self-conscious sister, their aunt, the boy down the street, even the whole neighborhood. Add the enigmatic beauty of swans, the goodness as well as the self-preoccupation of regular people, and the pains of growing up, and you get a book that makes you want to seek out other books by the same author.

What is also poignant about this book is the way she brings out Charlie as a human being too. The way he perceives people, the way he gets confused about people intentions towards him, his deep emotional response to the breathtaking beauty of the swans. "There was something painfully beautiful about the swans. The whiteness, elegance of them on the dark lake, the incredible ease of their movements made Sara catch her breath as she and Charlie rounded the dump of pines. 'There they are Charlie' she could tell the exact moment he saw them because his hand tightened; he really held her hand for

the first time since they had left Mary's. Then he stopped. The six swans seemed motionless on the water, their necks all arched at the same angle, so it that it seemed there was only one swan mirrored five times. There are the swans she said again she felt like she would like to stand there pointing out the swans to Charlie for the rest of the Summer."

This book won the Newberry award in 1971. Betsy Byars is an American author of many children's books, she has been called 'one of the ten best children's writers in the world and has also been listed as one of the Educational Paperback Association's top 100 authors. She won the national award for The Night Swimmers. She deals particularly well with issues of growing up. She is known for her light unfussy style, and her humour. ■

THE GOOD READING GUIDE

FIVE TO SEVEN

- 1) Mama Panya's Pancakes - Mary and Rich Chamberlain
- 2) My grandson is a Genius - Giles Andreae
- 3) Ubiquitous - Joyce Sidman
- 4) Ruler of the courtyard - Rukhsana Khan
- 5) The Light in the Attic - Shel Silverstein

SEVEN TO NINE

- 1) What Shape is an Elephant? Rumi
- 2) The Brook Book, Exploring the Smallest streams - Jim Anosky
- 3) The light in the attic - Shel Silverstein
- 4) Sacred River - Ted Lewin
- 5) The kuia and the Spider Patricia Grace

NINE TO TWELVE

- 1) Traveling man the story of Ibn Battuta - James Rumford
- 2) The Incredible Journey - Sheila Burnford
- 3) No flying in the House - Betty Brock
- 4) Harriet the Spy - Louise Fitzhugh
- 5) Rusty Runs Away - Ruskin Bond

YOUNG ADULTS

- 1) The orphan of Ellis Island - Elvira Woodruff
- 2) Charles and Emma, the Darwin's leap of faith - Deborah Helgman
- 3) The Tulip Touch - Anne Fine
- 4) The Farthest Shore - Ursula Le Guin
- 5) The War Horse - Michael Morpurgo



A LIBRARY STORY

Mridula Koshy and Michael Creighton began to volunteer work at the Sheik Sarai (New Delhi) campus of Deepalaya Schools over four years ago. Early 2010 they started a reading program there, which has now transformed into a full-fledged library. We reproduce below the letter from Mridula to the people who helped make this happen in the hope of inspiring others to take on similar projects.

Dear all of you,

I am including you in the list of recipients for this mail because you have either contributed to creating the library at Deepalaya or have expressed an interest in supporting the project. Thank you for all you have done already and intend to do in the future. The library at Deepalaya is up and running, functioning beautifully, if not always smoothly. It couldn't have happened without the wide community support of which you are a part.

Mainly though the library is up and running because there is a relationship between readers and books that is true wherever in the world one looks to create it. I can't say that Michael and I began our reading program at Deepalaya in February of 2010 with the idea that this would result in something so grand as a library. We meant to read to a handful of children - twelve or fifteen or twenty - after school, and maybe introduce them to the idea of literature. The children were bright and eager to listen to stories, touch and handle books, to pore over the illustrations, to talk about it all - history, politics, art and mostly about themselves and their lives. It became impossible to keep up with their growing need for books, more books. The requests kept mounting.

If a child read one Roald Dahl inevitably he wanted to know if there were more. Children progressed at different speeds based on their abilities, but all the children progressed. Those who loved glittery picture books with unicorns on their cover asked if there weren't more glittery picture books. Those who wanted to know more about World War II read Anne Frank's Diary. Those who read the pictures in the English language edition of Tintin comics wanted to know if these books weren't available in Hindi so they could read the words as well. We found they are in fact available in Hindi. The single bag of books we took out to Deepalaya for our weekly hour-long session became a bookshelf the school allowed us to store a few dozen then a hundred or more books in. By December of 2010 we realized this wasn't enough. We broke for Christmas break having given each child a book of their own and having held many animated conversations with the children about how they could exchange these books amongst themselves, in effect creating a lending circle or library of their own.

It was clear though that we needed an actual library.

It's been nearly six months since we started asking for help creating this library. Through the participation of friends and family members; institutions like Zubaan, Random House India, Scholastic India, Grey Oak Publishers; the leadership and farsighted vision of leaders in Deepalaya - the Principal, Gitanjali Krishnan, and Executive Director, Sudha Parthasarathy; and the gigantic amount of time, talent, money and books contributed by the students, parents and teachers of the American Embassy School in Delhi, we now have a staff person hired and funded to run the library on a half time basis for the next two years.

Rs 2 lakhs was raised to make this possible. The room in which the library is housed is large enough to accommodate a class of students. It is lined with beautifully painted dark blue bookshelves and book bins on wheels (for the little ones); all told, there are roughly eighteen hundred titles that five hundred students have access to.

Priya Ma'am, the new librarian, keeps the library open through the school day and children in the upper grades are allowed to check out one book at a time, each week. Priya Ma'am has attended training sessions at the American Embassy School (AES) and is being mentored by the library staff there. There is a commitment on AES's part to maintaining an ongoing relationship with Deepalaya library.

Most recently, last Wednesday, Michael and I attended our last reading session at Deepalaya. We conducted a two hour training for the teaching staff on reading aloud to children and on the value of silent reading time in class. The teachers were excited but apprehensive about what this means for the use of their teaching time. But the Principal and many of the teaching staff understand that if reading is to take off, one needs not only the room and the books but also the teachers who understand both how to bring reading to children and the value of doing this.

Our last session with the children was later that afternoon. It was sad to say goodbye: books were read, chocolates distributed, email addresses exchanged and we collected many homemade cards from the children. Most of them were signed 'by your best student' and they really all were the best students - all sixty or so of the children who over the course of this last year have been part of our after

school program. The two cards - I don't know who copied who - that touched me the most ended with "we promise you that we will grow up to be wonderful human beings."

I do worry about whether the classroom teachers will implement the twenty minutes of Read Aloud and/or twenty minutes of Silent Reading we advocate should take place daily. I don't know a lot of things about the future but I am glad to see many children in Deepalaya have already grasped what it is to be a reader - it is nothing short of being a human being, and a wonderful one at that. I trust that books will do what they have always done in the face of all our incompetencies - exert a power to pull us toward the best in all of us.

I trust that though we will be gone from Delhi for the next couple years, you will continue to take an interest in Deepalaya Library. Many of you spoke of volunteering to read to the children. This is crucial for the continued health of the library. These next two summer months, Deepalaya will stay open all day, to run summer programs that involve children in extracurricular activities. Please do contact Gitanjali Krishnan (she welcomes your calls) if you want to come in during the day to read to small groups of children. If you just want to assist Priya Ma'am in maintaining the library or if you have other ideas for participation, summer is a good time to get your feet wet; school is open from 8-12 daily, and the curriculum is more flexible than it is during the regular school year. ■

The Principal can be reached at the following address and phone number:

GITANJALI KRISHNAN

Deepalaya School, B-64 Panchsheel Vihar, Sheikh Sarai-Phase 1, New Delhi - 110017 (Tel: 01129541137)

(Mridula Koshy is the author of *If it is Sweet*)

